

## (Un)holy alliances: The UK's hostile environment in faith-based spaces, and its implications for refugee protection

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### Abstract

This paper aims to interrogate the United Kingdom (UK)'s so-called 'hostile environment' and its implications for refugee protection. The work looks in particular at the mixed-status setting of faith-based spaces, which with the advent of the 'hostile environment' have gone from being one of few places where people with a range of statuses could access support to becoming a locus of immigration control. It is argued that the reimagining of faith-based spaces as an arena for immigration enforcement is key to the functioning of the 'hostile environment,' a policy package ostensibly targeting undocumented people which in fact impacts on people with a range of statuses, with worrying consequences for refugee protection.

Semi-structured interviews with faith-based community volunteers who engaged with the Home Office are analysed alongside data disclosed by the Home Office under the Freedom of Information Act. Combined with analysis of the legal barriers to accessing protection, this work questions how voluntary the 'voluntary' returns being promoted in faith-based spaces really are, given the lack of options available to those unable to regularise their status.

### Keywords

Faith; Hostile environment; Voluntary return; Refugee protection

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## 1. Introduction

This paper explores the UK's so-called 'hostile environment' measures, and their implications for refugee protection. The present research follows disclosures about the far-reaching impacts of policies ostensibly designed to target undocumented migrants. In April 2018 it came to light that British citizens had for years been denied healthcare, detained and in some cases removed from the UK if they were unable to prove their immigration status. The disclosures, now known as the Windrush scandal, threw into sharp relief policies introduced from 2014 that sought to create "a really hostile environment for illegal immigrants".<sup>1</sup> The scandal raised important questions about the functioning of this system – now known as the hostile environment – which, as we will see, extends responsibility for immigration enforcement far beyond the state sector, to include private actors like landlords and employers.

The paper looks in particular at an under-researched aspect of state immigration enforcement policy: engagement with faith-based grassroots organisations to encourage and facilitate voluntary returns. The work asks why an increased focus on engaging with faith communities for the purpose of immigration enforcement coincided with the advent of other hostile environment policies. Ultimately, looking at the barriers to accessing refugee protection and the similarities between the rights afforded by different types of immigration status, the work questions whether the UK's voluntary returns scheme – which encompasses people actively seeking protection as well as undocumented people – conforms to guidelines from the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) about the voluntariness of state-sponsored repatriation programmes.<sup>2</sup>

The present paper fits within a growing body of work about the hostile environment but looks in particular at an under-researched aspect of that system: state engagement with faith-based organisations for the purposes of immigration enforcement. This area is currently under-studied partly due to attempts to keep engagement with faith-based communities discreet, because of state wariness about the perceived sensitivity of such operations. However, it can also be ascribed to a wider gap in the literature around the relationship between religion and migration.

Chapter One is the literature review, which situates the present work within existing scholarship on three key issues: the 'refugee' / 'migrant' label, the hostile environment and the relationships between religion and migration. Chapter Two, building on the analysis in Chapter One of academic perspectives on the 'refugee' / 'migrant' label, looks at how the hostile environment and other associated policies operate in practice to restrict the rights of refugees and asylum-seekers as well as undocumented migrants. This is done first through an analysis of laws that restrict arrivals, and criminalise those arriving in an irregular manner, with a knock-on effect on potential claims for refugee status. The second part looks at specific UK policies and the generalised anti-migrant rhetoric associated with the hostile environment which, it is argued, affect undocumented people and those with a protection claim in similar ways post-arrival.

Chapter Two, then, analyses the ways in which current UK migration policy works in practice to restrict the rights of people with a range of statuses in similar ways, and calls into question the relevance of the refugee/migrant distinction in practice. Chapter Three goes on to look in-depth at how one immigration enforcement practice integral to the hostile environment – the voluntary returns scheme – has been introduced into the mixed-status setting of faith-based spaces. This analysis is based on interviews with volunteers who worked alongside the Home Office to encourage voluntary returns of visitors to faith-based spaces. This final chapter considers whether the introduction of immigration enforcement to faith-based spaces may in fact represent a key, if under-researched, tranche of the wider hostile environment strategy. As we will see, people with all kinds of migration status, and some whose status is not known, are encouraged within the informal and trusting environment of the faith-based space to accept voluntary return to their country of origin. It is proposed that the safe and voluntary nature of these returns is called into question by the paucity of alternative options available to undocumented people and asylum-seekers whose rights are restricted in similar ways despite their divergent status.

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1 James Kirkup and Robert Winnett, 'Theresa May Interview: We're going to give illegal migrants a really hostile reception,' *The Telegraph* (London, 25 May 2012 [7] < <https://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/uknews/immigration/9291483/Theresa-May-interview-Were-going-to-give-illegal-migrants-a-really-hostile-reception.html>> accessed 7 June 2020.

2 UNHCR, 'Voluntary repatriation: International protection' (1996).

## 2. Methodology

Several methods have been used to extract the data used here, with quantitative and qualitative data integrated throughout. This mixed-methods approach is well-suited to the field of forced migration studies, which is necessarily interdisciplinary in nature.<sup>3</sup> The quantitative data research for this project was mostly obtained through Freedom of Information (FOI) requests submitted to the UK Home Office, the government body that has been responsible for immigration control since 1973. This is combined with analysis of published guidance for Home Office caseworkers. There is also extensive use of reports published by the Independent Chief Inspector of Borders and Immigration (ICIBI), which include interviews with Home Office caseworkers and policy-makers. These sources were extracted from the Home Office website.

FOI requests were relied upon because, despite the practical difficulties they presented, they allowed for the extraction of new data. The FOI responses are included as appendices to this paper, grouped together where appropriate. Some of the difficulties encountered during the course of the research – particularly the long response times – were foreseen and built into the project design. Others proved insurmountable, but came to inform the scope and findings of the project. For example, the researcher submitted numerous requests for data about the immigration status of people who had been reported to the Home Office as potentially undocumented, but who were found to have a valid form of leave to remain in the UK. These were refused<sup>4</sup>, because extracting such data would take over 24 hours, and would therefore exceed the cost limit. This was even the case when a single week's worth of data was requested.<sup>5</sup> According to data disclosed through previous FOI requests, members of the public were reporting large numbers of people who had leave to remain to the Home Office as being potentially undocumented<sup>6</sup>. The fact that the Home Office did not record what type of leave these individuals were found to have in the same database, and hence could not monitor the effect that this element of anti-migrant rhetoric had on refugees and asylum-seekers, went on to inform follow-up research questions.

For the literature review, a systematic review of the extant literature on key topics was carried out using Google Scholar. Although Google Scholar is acknowledged to be an imperfect tool,<sup>7</sup> it proved useful for carrying out this literature review because it indexes both academic articles and non-commercially published texts such as government reports. Advanced search operators helped to narrow down the results and highlight the most relevant literature.

To extract the qualitative data used in this work, purposive sampling was used to identify potential participants, through contact with relevant organisations known to have worked with the Home Office on voluntary returns schemes in faith-based spaces. Given the specific and sensitive nature of the research question, the target population was small. Several attempts at snowball sampling, the process of using trusted gatekeepers to recruit future interview participants from within their networks, were unsuccessful. Despite the drawbacks inherent in actively selecting interview participants rather than using a more open sampling technique,<sup>8</sup> purposive sampling was ultimately deemed appropriate for this research, especially given the hard-to-reach nature of potential interviewees.

Months of in-depth research yielded four participants, with many more non-respondents than respondents. A semi-structured approach was adopted for interviews, because it allowed for a developmental approach, with the questions changing from one participant to the next in order to probe for further information.<sup>9</sup> This was particularly key since this topic had not yet been explored in an academic context, meaning that a more structured approach would have meant risking closing off possible lines of enquiry.

MS<sup>10</sup> worked with a voluntary faith-based group that helped to facilitate returns for rough sleepers from his religious community, from 2011 to 2013. MS was interviewed via Skype call on 27 Aug. 2018. GS<sup>11</sup> was involved with a formal

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3 Manfred Bergman, 'The century of migration and the contribution of mixed methods research' (2018) 4 *Journal of Mixed Methods Research* 371.

4 See Appendix A for full data.

5 Ibid.

6 See Appendix J for full data.

7 Jan Piasecki, Marcin Waligora and Vilius Dranseika, 'Google search as an additional source in systematic reviews' (2018) 2 *Science and Engineering Ethics* 809.

8 Ilker Etikan, Sulaiman Musa and Rukayya Sunusi Alkassim, 'Comparison of Convenience Sampling and Convenience Sampling' (2016) 1 *American Journal of Theoretical and Applied Statistics*, 3.

9 Martyn Denscombe, *The Good Research Guide: For Small-Scale Social Research Projects* (Open University 1998) 187.

10 See Appendix C for full transcript.

11 See Appendix D for full transcript.

religious institution that from 2013 received Home Office funding to facilitate voluntary returns for people who interacted with the institution. GS was interviewed via Skype call on 18 Sep. 2018. NM<sup>12</sup> was a local councillor and participated in a Home Office-funded scheme run by a religious organisation, again to facilitate returns mostly among people sleeping rough. NM was interviewed via email on 30 Aug. 2018. MP<sup>13</sup> worked at a grassroots feminist organisation with strong links to local faith groups and visitors to those groups. MP was interviewed in person at the organisation's office on 4 Jul. 2019.

All participants were informed at the outset of their right to withdraw consent at any time, and to be anonymised as they chose. They were provided with written information about the scope and potential further use of their data before agreeing to be interviewed, and again orally ahead of the interview.

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12 See Appendix E for full transcript.

13 See Appendix F for full transcript.

### 3. Literature review

#### 3.1 Mixed migration, mixed labels

Academics studying forced migration have grappled with the meaning of the label 'refugee' since refugee studies emerged as a discrete field. Indeed, Cole<sup>14</sup> argues that the *Journal of Refugee Studies*, the preeminent journal for the study of refugee law and the refugee experience, was established in 1988 with the express aim of interrogating the label and its limits.

There is lively debate among scholars as to how far back the modern definition of the 'refugee' label stretches, and whether the "refugee-migrant binary"<sup>15</sup> of much modern scholarship and policy has always existed. Hathaway, for example, argues that refugees were defined before 1939 as casualties of "broad-based social or political occurrences,"<sup>16</sup> more akin to modern perceptions of the 'migrant,' with the notion of individual persecution as central to refugeehood coming only later. Long agrees, arguing that historically, "refugee and migrant were fluid identities."<sup>17</sup> McAdam, meanwhile, argues that the personalised understanding of refugeehood, with the refugee being an individual suffering persecution because of their personal characteristics, goes back much further, at least as far as the British Aliens Act of 1905.<sup>18</sup>

There is consensus, though, that the 1951 Convention was the instrument that set in place the modern understanding of refugeehood, one that centres the experience of individualised persecution as the stimulus for movement. According to the Convention, still referred to as the "cornerstone" of protection,<sup>19</sup> (as well as other derived instruments such as the EU Qualification Directive)<sup>20</sup> persons ascribed the label 'refugee' have one or a number of specific reasons for crossing borders, and once they do so, become eligible for the specific set of rights accorded to people in that category. In the decades that have passed since the 1951 Convention was drafted, scholars have increasingly begun to question its continuing relevance, given the huge changes in the volume and patterns of global mobility.<sup>21</sup> Nevertheless, many still argue that to stray from the Convention's legal definition, or to broaden the use of the label 'refugee,' would dilute the rights owing to that group of people.<sup>22</sup>

In a 2007 paper, published 20 years after his first, now seminal, text on the matter, Zetter acknowledges that the process of labelling someone 'refugee' or 'not refugee' is based on a power imbalance between labelled and labeller.<sup>23</sup> He also recognises that "the label 'refugee' has become much more blurred than in the past."<sup>24</sup> According to Zetter, there are various reasons for this, including increased economic and social interaction between refugees and the countries they have fled, and the increasing complexity of the reasons for and patterns of flight. The label 'forced migrant,' which is broader than that of 'refugee' as defined in the 1951 Convention, is increasingly commonly used, perhaps because it is flexible enough to describe the experience of people who have fled for complex and various reasons. However, Zetter argues that the 'refugee' label remains relevant, since only a label defined by an international legal instrument can ensure that particular rights are granted to people categorised thereby.<sup>25</sup>

More recent literature also argues that the 'refugee' label should be protected and kept semantically separate from other labels that categorise people who move. Cole, for example, reasons that although understandings of the label are "highly changeable," it retains its relevance because it gives those categorised as 'refugees' access to the "sizeable

14 Georgia Cole, 'Beyond labelling: Rethinking the role and value of the refugee 'label' through semiotics' (2018) 1 *Journal of Refugee Studies* 1, 2.

15 Thomas Rhoden, 'Beyond the Refugee-Migrant Binary? Refugee Camp Residency along the Myanmar-Thailand Border' (2019) 1 *Journal of International Migration and Integration* 49.

16 James Hathaway, 'A Reconsideration of the Underlying Premise of Refugee Law' (1990) 1 *Harvard International Law Journal* 129, 139.

17 Katy Long, 'When refugees stopped being migrants: Movement, labour and humanitarian protection' (2013) 1 *Migration Studies* 4, 6.

18 Jane McAdam, 'Rethinking the Origins of 'Persecution' in Refugee Law' (2014) 4 *International Journal of Refugee Law* 667, 668.

19 'Q&A: The 1951 Refugee Convention 'is as relevant today as it was at the time' (2016) UNHCR [4].

20 Directive 2011/95/EU of the European Parliament and of the Council [2011] OJ L 337/9-337/26.

21 Adrienne Millbank, 'The problem with the 1951 Refugee Convention' [2000] 5 *Social Policy Group Research Paper*.

22 Erika Feller, 'The Refugee Convention at 60: Still fit for its purpose?' [2011] UNHCR 1, 12; Jane McAdam, 'The Enduring Relevance of the 1951 Refugee Convention' (2017) 1 *International Journal of Refugee Law* 1.

23 Roger Zetter, 'More Labels, Fewer Refugees: Remaking the Refugee Label in an Era of Globalization' (2007) 2 *Journal of Refugee Studies* 172, 184.

24 *Ibid.*, 188.

25 *Ibid.*, 189.

political and financial resources of the refugee regime.”<sup>26</sup> However, such arguments obscure a key tenet of refugee law: that refugee status is declaratory, rather than constitutive. As UNHCR has long argued, an analysis of refugee law makes it clear that “any person is a refugee within the framework of a given instrument if he [or she] meets the criteria of the refugee definition in that instrument, whether he [or she] is formally recognised or not.”<sup>27</sup> As such, and in the context of increasing barriers to obtaining refugee status in the Global North, some scholars warn that focusing on labels could reify differences that bear little weight in reality. Meissner,<sup>28</sup> for example, argues for a focus on post-migration outcomes, rather than on the reasons for migration and the labels ascribed to individuals on arrival. This is because what she terms “status diversity” – the proliferation of labels ascribed to people with diverse migratory purposes and histories – results in people with vastly different histories being granted very similar conditions of stay and rights on arrival.<sup>29</sup> For example, in the UK people granted a visa as the partner of a British citizen and people recognised as refugees are both given five years’ temporary leave to remain, with the right to work, and then have to apply for Indefinite Leave to Remain. Conversely, two people with more similar life paths may end up with very different rights in the UK. For example, two people fleeing persecution in the same country, one because of sexual orientation and another because of religious belief, may have very different outcomes if the inclinations of Zetter’s “bureaucratic labellers” mean that one is granted refugee status and the other not.<sup>30</sup>

Further, Meissner<sup>31</sup> argues that even people labelled ‘refugees’ are granted different rights according to the host country where their claim is recognised. Because of this, and ‘status diversity’ within countries, Meissner argues that the ‘refugee’ label no longer holds water for scholars looking to examine the reality of how law, policy and rights intersect in the lived experience of people who move and, crucially, *stay*.<sup>32</sup>

### 3.2 What is a ‘hostile environment’?

Originally used mostly in and about conflict zones, for example the ‘hostile environment’ training given to journalists in war-zones,<sup>33</sup> the term has since 2012 been used increasingly frequently to describe various aspects of migration policy and rhetoric in the UK that restrict the rights of people who move in multiple ways. Indeed, a review using Google Scholar found just one academic journal article published in 2012 that used the phrase ‘hostile environment’ relating to migration in the UK. By 2013 this had risen to 7, and then, in the following year, to 11. 2018 saw 70 academic articles published that discussed the ‘hostile environment’ in UK migration policy. With this explosion in the use of the phrase has come a diversification of understandings of the ‘hostile environment,’ of who it is designed to affect and of who it affects in practice, a discussion that will be explored further in Chapter Two. This section, though, looks at the diverse understandings that scholars within the forced migration field have of these terms.

The use of the term ‘hostile environment’ in relation to government policy on migration in the UK stems not from scholars or civil society, but from policy-makers themselves. In a now-infamous 2012 interview, then-Home Secretary (later Prime Minister) Theresa May laid out her aim “to create here in Britain a really hostile environment for illegal migration.”<sup>34</sup> In that interview, May outlined the architecture of that ‘hostile environment,’ promising stricter controls on employment, access to private rented accommodation and driving licences for undocumented migrants. To implement these restrictions, she announced new measures to be introduced into law by the Immigration Act 2014, measures which were subsequently strengthened by the Immigration Act 2016. The first of these introduced sweeping changes, including fines for landlords who let property to people with no leave to remain in the UK, and for employers who hire workers without valid leave. Under the 2016 act, employers hiring workers without the required type of leave were now liable to criminal sanctions, as were landlords. Many scholars date the hostile environment back to these acts.<sup>35</sup> Although it was planned and publicly discussed from 2012 onwards, scholars like Bales and Kilner argue that these acts represented the legislative realisation of a system designed to restrict the rights of undocumented

26 Cole (n14), 3.

27 ‘Note on determination of refugee status under international instruments’ (1977) UNHCR [5].

28 Fran Meissner, ‘Legal status diversity: regulating to control and everyday contingencies’ (2018) 2 *Journal of Ethnic and Migration Studies* 287, 288.

29 Ibid.

30 Zetter (n23), 178.

31 Meissner (n28), 295.

32 Ibid., 303.

33 ‘Journalist security in hostile environments’ 2017 AKE Group.

34 Kirkup and Winnett (n1).

35 Hannah Kilner, ‘Hostile health care: Why charging migrants will harm the most vulnerable’ (2014) 626 *British Journal of General Practice* 590; Katie Bales, ‘Immigration raids, employer collusion and the Immigration Act 2016’ (2017) 2 *Industrial Law Journal* 279, 284.



people and encourage them to leave the country.<sup>36</sup> For these authors, the hostile environment is a specific set of policies aimed explicitly and solely at undocumented migrants - the term commonly used in academia to refer to the people that May described as "illegal migrants."<sup>37</sup>

For many scholars working in migration studies, the ideological core of the hostile environment is the extension of responsibility for border control to non-state actors, as seen in the 2014 and 2016 Acts. Within the hostile environment, border checks are "no longer one-off encounters between border guards and immigrants...but are routinely repeated in a myriad of micro-encounters"<sup>38</sup> during, for example, meetings with potential landlords and job interviews. These outsourced border checks have been described using a range of different terminology, including "everyday bordering."<sup>39</sup> However, 'hostile environment' is the phrase far more commonly used to describe a system in which private citizens are encouraged – or compelled – to question the immigration status of other members of the community.

The impact this aspect of the hostile environment has on the relationship between citizen and state is the focus of much work in this field. For example, Dhaliwal and Forkert<sup>40</sup> explore the way in which hostile environment policies foment suspicion and division within communities. Aliverti, meanwhile, discusses the implications of "turning residents into unpaid and untrained migration officers"<sup>41</sup> for community relations and citizenship in general.

Webber,<sup>42</sup> by contrast, takes a uniquely rights-based approach to the hostile environment, focusing on how each policy in turn affects the human rights of migrants in the UK. She describes the hostile environment as a web of "economic, security, migration and labour policies which...deny basic human rights to poor migrants and refugees."<sup>43</sup> Her granular analysis situates each aspect of the hostile environment within the international human rights law framework, describing for example housing restrictions as a violation of Article 25 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. This less common approach highlights the international human rights framework and the ways in which it is implemented (or not) vis-à-vis migrants in the UK.

Where Webber does coincide with the majority of scholars writing about the hostile environment, though, is in dating the hostile environment back to the 2014 and 2016 Immigration Acts.<sup>44</sup> However, others warn that this risks ahistoricising what has in fact been a long process not just of restricting migrants' rights in general, but of doing so by outsourcing immigration control to non-state actors. Some, like Wardle and Obermuller,<sup>45</sup> characterise the hostile environment as both the product and the instrumentalisation of a wider anti-immigrant rhetoric that, in fact, stretches back to before the wave of post-war migration to Britain, mainly from Commonwealth countries.

Bowling and Westenra concur that the UK's hostile environment stretches back decades.<sup>46</sup> However, in contrast to other scholars they see it as an integral part of a global system that has emerged over the past four decades in the context of ever-greater mobility of capital, and the reliance for the production of that capital on the cheap labour of migrants from the Global South. They argue that the hostile environment is the end product of a system of criminalising migration, through a process of blending criminal and immigration law, to create a so-called "crimmigration" system.<sup>47</sup> As they point out, there is now a criminal offence corresponding to almost every type of breach of UK immigration law. In this system, asylum-seekers are just as liable to be detained as overstayers, and "lawful permanent residence remains a kind of probationary membership of the nation-state," even for those granted refugee status.<sup>48</sup> According

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36 Ibid.

37 Kirkup and Winnett (n1).

38 Nando Sigona, 'Hostile environment: Border guards and border guardees' *Open Democracy* (12 June 2018) [1] <<https://www.opendemocracy.net/en/hostile-environment-border-guard-and-border-guardee/>> accessed 7 June 2020.

39 Nira Yuval-Davis, Georgie Wemyss and Kathryn Cassidy, 'Everyday bordering, belonging and the reorientation of British immigration legislation' (2017) 2 *Sociology* 228.

40 Sukhwant Dhaliwal and Kirsten Forkert, 'Deserving and undeserving migrants' [2015] *Soundings*.

41 Ana Aliverti, 'Enlisting the public in the policing of immigration' (2015) 2 *The British Journal of Criminology* 215, 223.

42 Frances Webber, 'On the creation of the UK's 'hostile environment'' (2019) 4 *Race & Class* 76.

43 Ibid., 77.

44 Webber, (n42), 76.

45 Huon Wardle and Hannah Obermuller, "'Windrush generation" and "hostile environment": Symbols and lived experiences in Caribbean migration to the UK' (2019) 1 *Migration and Society* 81, 81.

46 Ben Bowling and Sophie Westenra, 'A really hostile environment': Adiaphorization, global policing and the crimmigration control system' (2018) 8 *TLI Think! Paper* 1.

47 Ibid., 1.

48 Ibid., 16.



to Bowling and Westenra, internal border checks (and criminal sanctions for those found to be in breach of the rules) go hand-in-hand with attempts to “stem flows at source” through increasingly restrictive visa rules and pre-boarding document checks.<sup>49</sup>

Though prosecution rates for immigration crimes are low, Bowling and Westenra argue,<sup>50</sup> linking immigration to crime serves a rhetorical as well as a practical purpose. Seeing the hostile environment as a manifestation of ‘crimmigration,’ which, according to them, has been being rolled out in the UK since the 1970s, allows scholars to situate it within a global context of restrictions on the migration and asylum space. This analysis, which understands deportation as the ultimate objective behind the hostile environment, helps us to understand the interplay between deterring arrivals and encouraging departures. Their perspective will be valuable in subsequent chapters, which suggest that restricting arrivals is in fact a key part of the UK’s internal hostile environment.

### 3.3 Religion and migration

The relationship between religion and migration represents the third key question of this work. The literature on migration and religion remains limited – indeed, practically the only point of agreement between scholars writing in this space over the course of several decades is that not enough attention has been paid to the relation between religion and migration. This may be beginning to change, with a major 2016 volume focusing solely on the intersections between religion and migration.<sup>51</sup> However, it continues to be the exception for studies of migration to consider religion – that is, the role of religion, and the ways it can shape individuals’ social selves and their understanding of themselves in the world, has not been “mainstreamed” in the way that gender has been, with varying levels of success, in much migration policy and theory.<sup>52</sup>

Efforts to mainstream a factor like gender in migration are an acknowledgement that gender is integral to an individual’s motivations around, experience of and expectations from a migration journey. The same could be argued of religious faith, where it is held. However, in most cases it seems mainly to be considered as an additional factor, rather than something that can shape every aspect of the experience of someone who lives within a religious tradition, and which therefore is also integral to their experience of migration. Saunders, Fiddian-Qasmiyeh and Snyder argue that this is because of the “secular biases” of academics studying migration, who almost always write from within a social studies rather than a theological tradition.<sup>53</sup> However, this lacuna could also be ascribed to the fact that religion can affect an individual’s lived experience in a multitude of ways.<sup>54</sup> This makes it an especially complex focus of study, and also means that scholars advance a number of different perspectives on why it is a crucial area to investigate.

For example, Gozdzia and Shandy argue that the imperative to focus on religion in the context of migration stems from the Refugee Convention, since persecution or fear of persecution on the basis of religious belief can give rise to refugee status.<sup>55</sup> But as they point out, “despite the fact that religious persecution figures prominently in the UN definition... public debates about migration and displacement on the international and national levels have tended to ignore religion.”<sup>56</sup> Similarly, Madziva’s account of decision-making on the asylum claims of Christians from Pakistan highlights how integral faith and different cultured understandings of its expression can be in determining asylum claims.<sup>57</sup> Her focus on the intimate questions asked of applicants also reminds us that state intervention into the relationship between an individual and their faith is far from a new phenomenon.

Hirvi, writing about the extremely small Sikh community in Finland, argues that religion is so important to migrants because it provides a home from home, a sense of comfort as they move through a new culture and experience.<sup>58</sup>

49 Bowling and Westenra (n46) 8.

50 Ibid., 5.

51 Jennifer Saunders, Elena Fiddian-Qasmiyeh and Susanna Snyder, *Intersections of religion and migration: Issues at the global crossroads* (Palgrave Macmillan 2016).

52 Jane Freedman, ‘Mainstreaming gender in refugee protection’ (2011) 4 Cambridge Review of International Affairs 589, 594.

53 Saunders, Fiddian-Qasmiyeh and Snyder, ‘Introduction’ in Saunders, Fiddian-Qasmiyeh and Snyder (eds), *Intersections of religion and migration: Issues at the global crossroads* (Palgrave Macmillan 2016), 2.

54 Martha Frederiks, ‘Religion, migration and identity: A conceptual and theoretical exploration,’ in Martha Frederiks and Dorottya Nagy, eds., *Religion, migration and identity: Methodological and theological explorations* (Brill 2016) 9.

55 Elzbieta Gozdzia and Dianna Shandy, ‘Editorial introduction: Religion and spirituality in forced migration,’ (2002) 2 Journal of Refugee Studies 129.

56 Ibid., 129.

57 Roda Madziva, ‘“Your name does not tick the box”: the intertwining of names, bodies, religion and nationality in the construction of identity within the UK asylum system’ (2017) 5 Ethnic and Racial Studies 938.

58 Laura Hirvi, ‘The Sikh gurdwara in Finland: Negotiating, maintaining and transmitting migrants’ identities’ (2010) 2 South Asian

However, as she documents, this comfort is achieved by fusing traditions from 'here' and 'there'.<sup>59</sup> For example, unable to visit their gurdwara every day due to different working practices in Finland, the community instead kept it locked most of the week and opened on Saturday afternoons, to accommodate worshippers who worked late at bars and clubs. This is an instance of what Saunders, Fiddian-Qasmiyeh and Snyder argue is missing in much of the literature; a reflection not just on the ways in which faith shapes migration, but also on the "malleability of religious traditions and practices in processes of (im)mobility and migration"<sup>60</sup>. Hirvi's conception of the faith space as a home from home for migrants is common in explorations of religion and migration. However, as Saunders, Fiddian-Qasmiyeh and Snyder argue, it can obscure some of the complexity in how migrants experience religion, and risks instrumentalising the relationship between religion and migration.<sup>61</sup> As they note, religion and the way it is experienced intersect with other identity markers such as gender and ethnicity. Looking at these issues, Fiddian-Qasmiyeh and Qasmiyeh present a nuanced exploration of how the racialisation of religion complicates asylum-seekers' relationship to and experience of their own Muslim identity upon arriving in the UK.<sup>62</sup> As they note, "Muslim asylum-seekers' and refugees' identities have been transformed in/by the public imagination," with the focus on their Muslim identity, which is perceived as threatening, rather than their identity as refugees.<sup>63</sup>

The complicated relationship their interviewees had with their own faith – with some actively turning away from the faith on arrival, and others becoming more active in both the community and the practice of their faith – highlights the importance of being mindful of the "different positions of power in different geopolitical spheres" occupied by various religious traditions.<sup>64</sup> This is particularly salient given the lack of diversity in much existing work on religion and migration, with most research undertaken in the Global North,<sup>65</sup> and the resulting temptation to extrapolate findings from one context and apply them to another.

The 'home from home' approach to religion and migration also obscures the fact that religion is often not just a source of comfort (or not at all a source of comfort), but can be a spur to political action, as explored by Pavey and Saavedra in their work on undocumented migrants in the US motivated by their religious belief to 'come out' about their immigration status.<sup>66</sup> However, as long as we resist the temptation to homogenise groups of migrants belonging to the same faith and obscure crucial differences like class and caste,<sup>67</sup> the concept of religion as a 'home from home' can be valuable. This is particularly relevant here as we explore faith communities in the context of the hostile environment which, as is discussed in Chapter Two, has restricted the rights of migrants with all kinds of status. The concept of the faith-based community as a 'home from home' may be instructive when we come to consider, in Chapter Three, why state actors would now appear to be reimagining faith environments as a forum for immigration enforcement, as visitors to those spaces face an increasingly hostile environment in the world beyond.

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Diaspora 219.

59 Ibid., 223.

60 Saunders, Fiddian-Qasmiyeh and Snyder (n51), 5.

61 Ibid.

62 Elena Fiddian-Qasmiyeh and Yousif Qasmiyeh, 'Muslim asylum-seekers and refugees: Negotiating identity, politics and religion in the UK' (2010) 3 *Journal of Refugee Studies* 294.

63 Ibid., 295.

64 Saunders, Fiddian-Qasmiyeh and Snyder (n51), 6.

65 Frederiks (n54).

66 Steve Pavey and Marco Saavedra, "Make holy the bare life": Theological reflections on migration grounded in collaborative praxis with youth made illegal by the United States' in Martha Frederiks and Dorottya Naga, *Religion, migration and identity: Methodological and theological explorations* (Brill 2016) 132.

67 Frederiks (n54).

## 4. A hostile environment for all

### 4.1 The who and why of the hostile environment

In Chapter One, we explored the work of scholars who argue that the term 'refugee' remains relevant in today's context. However, we also considered the fact that, in the context of shrinking asylum space the world over – but in the Global North particularly – the rights to which recognised refugees are entitled in countries of asylum may not differ significantly from those of other types of migrants. In this section, we look at how specific policies and generalised anti-migrant rhetoric – both of which, it will be argued, are essential to the hostile environment agenda – affect all categories of migrants. This is the context in which the faith-based interventions explored in Chapter Three take place, one in which the rights of people with diverse types of migratory history are restricted in similar ways, with worrying implications for refugee protection and the integrity of voluntary returns schemes.

As discussed in Chapter One, constrictive policies introduced from 2014 were ostensibly aimed at making the UK a “really hostile environment for illegal immigrants” specifically.<sup>68</sup> However, internal documents show that the scope of the hostile environment, and of *who* it would affect, has always been far broader. Internal Home Office guidance, for instance, states that the Interventions and Sanctions Directorate – the Home Office department responsible for designing and implementing the hostile environment<sup>69</sup> – was established in 2013 to: “discourage prospective illegal migrants; make it difficult for illegal migrants to live and work in the UK; incentivise voluntary departures or regularisation of stay; deter legal migrants from breaching conditions of leave”<sup>70</sup> [emphasis added]. The hostile environment, this document makes clear, has never targeted just undocumented people, but rather anyone with a status that *could* at some point become irregular – this includes people who have not yet arrived in the UK, as well as those with refugee and other types of leave.

Further evidence that the state acknowledges the slipperiness of immigration status, and hence that the architects of the hostile environment knew it would likely affect groups beyond its ostensible targets, comes from the government's response to recommendations about how it handles the data of migrants with various types of status. In a 2016 report, the ICIBI assessed 169 entries in the Home Office's list of disqualified persons, a database meant to include only individuals who have no valid leave and can therefore be targeted for enforcement and removal. The ICIBI's analysis found that 10% of the sample had been wrongly included, and were individuals with either valid leave to remain, a pending initial application or an outstanding appeal.<sup>71</sup> Accordingly, the ICIBI recommended that the government ‘cleanse’ this list so that people with leave or a pending application would no longer be vulnerable to enforcement action.<sup>72</sup> The Home Office, however, rejected this recommendation, arguing that “given the fluid nature of an individual's immigration status, the validity of any such cleansing exercise would be short-lived.”<sup>73</sup>

This is tantamount to acknowledgment of a fact highlighted by scholars like Long<sup>74</sup> – that in the real world people frequently slip in and out of status, and between different kinds of status. Indeed, the Home Office has since 2016 published quarterly data on the number of people who seek asylum in the UK, are refused and removed from the country, and then return and are granted status.<sup>75</sup> It is accepted, in this case, that people can be categorised first as asylum-seekers, then as refused asylum-seekers, then as deportees and then finally as refugees. Under the hostile environment, though, the slipperiness of immigration status is weaponised by the Home Office to justify restricting

68 Kirkup and Winnett (n1).

69 Colin Yeo, ‘The hostile environment: What is it and who does it affect?’ *New Europeans* (3 June 2017) [14] <<https://neweuropeans.net/article/1927/hostile-environment-what-it-and-who-does-it-affect>> accessed 7 June 2020.

70 ICIBI, ‘An inspection of Home Office (Borders, Immigration and Citizenship System) collaborative working with other government departments and agencies: February – October 2018’ (2019) 16 <[https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment\\_data/file/774736/An\\_inspection\\_of\\_Home\\_Office\\_collaborative\\_working\\_with\\_OGDs\\_and\\_agencies\\_web\\_version.pdf](https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/774736/An_inspection_of_Home_Office_collaborative_working_with_OGDs_and_agencies_web_version.pdf)> accessed 7 June 2020.

71 ICIBI, ‘An inspection of the ‘hostile environment’ measures relating to driving licences and bank accounts: January to July 2016’ (13 October 2016) 16 <[https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment\\_data/file/567652/ICIBI-hostile-environment-driving-licences-and-bank-accounts-January-to-July-2016.pdf](https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/567652/ICIBI-hostile-environment-driving-licences-and-bank-accounts-January-to-July-2016.pdf)> accessed 7 June 2020.

72 Ibid., 10.

73 Home Office, ‘The Home Office response to the Independent Chief Inspector's report: ‘An inspection of the “hostile environment” measures relating to driving licences and bank accounts”’ [7] <[https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment\\_data/file/560145/HO\\_response\\_-\\_ICI\\_hostile\\_environment\\_inspection\\_-\\_bank\\_accounts\\_and\\_driving\\_licences\\_October\\_2016.pdf](https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/560145/HO_response_-_ICI_hostile_environment_inspection_-_bank_accounts_and_driving_licences_October_2016.pdf)> accessed 7 June 2020.

74 Long (n17)

75 UK Visas and Immigration, ‘Asylum transparency data: May 2019’ <<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/asylum-transparency-data-may-2019>> accessed 7 June 2020.

the rights even of those known to have valid leave, on the basis that they could one day lose that status. Here we see the disconnect between how the public were told the hostile environment would function – to make life impossible for ‘illegal’ migrants – and how policy-makers understood it behind closed doors: as a set of measures that would inevitably affect people with diverse migratory histories.

As for the *why* of the hostile environment, policy-makers have consistently stated that the objectives are twofold: to discourage people from making the UK a destination country, and to make life so difficult for those already here without status that they leave.<sup>76</sup> Those already in the UK can be forcibly removed, but the Home Office prefers voluntary returns, which are significantly cheaper.<sup>77</sup> Thus, the hostile environment was introduced to “systematically... deny access to services and benefits for those who are unlawfully in the UK,”<sup>78</sup> with the express goal of increasing the number of voluntary returns, after the lack of success of policies that encouraged, rather than compelled, people to return voluntarily.<sup>79</sup>

The voluntary returns scheme is aimed at undocumented persons; it is also open to those whose asylum claims have been rejected, as well as those still actively seeking refugee status. If an asylum-seeker signs a voluntary returns form, their claim is automatically withdrawn,<sup>80</sup> and there is then no right of appeal.<sup>81</sup> Hostile environment policies, then, are aimed at increasing the numbers of voluntary returns – and these voluntary returns can encompass people with a whole range of statuses, including those actively seeking protection under the 1951 Convention.

## 4.2 Crossing a hostile border

The overarching aim of the hostile environment is to encourage voluntary returns – at a lower cost to the state – by making life difficult for migrants, as discussed above. But as Gibney argues,<sup>82</sup> there is an inextricable link between internal and external border control – that is, for a State to have full control over who is within the territory, it must also seek to establish control over people before they arrive. In the UK context, hostile environment policies that placed an internal border in the doctor’s waiting room and the letting agent’s office came on the back of a decades-long process of restricting access to the external border.

It is beyond the scope of this study to conduct an in-depth review of how controls at the external borders of the European Union, and hence the UK while it remained part of the union, have been tightened. However, one policy that merits exploration is carrier fines. Carrier Sanctions Directive 2001/51/EC sanctions transportation companies for letting passengers travel into Europe without the requisite documentation.

These sanctions, known as carrier fines, place responsibility for policing the external border into the hands of citizens, presaging the outsourcing of responsibility for border control under the UK’s hostile environment. In practice, they also mean that unless people have the resources to enable them to obtain a visit visa and claim asylum on arrival, people are unable to travel to Europe to seek asylum without recourse to smugglers.

Carrier fines are one among many measures which are aimed at deterring irregular migration to Europe, but which also restrict the rights of people crossing borders to make a claim for protection under the Refugee Convention.<sup>83</sup> As Goodwin-Gill and McAdam argue,<sup>84</sup> and the Council of Europe has acknowledged,<sup>85</sup> the legality of the barriers facing people who travel to Europe to seek asylum is questionable given the right to seek asylum enshrined in key instruments of international law, such as Article 18 of the EU Charter.<sup>86</sup> Together with other ‘passive’ policies like stringent visa

76 ICIBI (n71) 2.

77 Ibid., 13.

78 Ibid., 14.

79 Ibid.

80 Home Office, ‘Asylum policy instruction – Withdrawing asylum claims’ (2020) 11 <[https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment\\_data/file/883964/withdrawing-asylum-claims-v6.0ext.pdf](https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/883964/withdrawing-asylum-claims-v6.0ext.pdf)> accessed 7 June 2020.

81 Gherson Immigration, ‘New Home Office guidance on the withdrawal of asylum claims’ (7 July 2016) [8] <<https://www.gherson.com/blog/new-home-office-guidance-on-the-withdrawal-of-asylum-claims>> accessed 7 June 2020.

82 Matthew Gibney, ‘Is deportation a form of forced migration?’ (2013) 2 Refugee Survey Quarterly 116, 116.

83 Theodore Baird, ‘Carrier sanctions in Europe: A comparison of trends in 10 countries’ (2017) 3 European Journal of Migration and Law 307.

84 Guy Goodwin-Gill and Jane McAdam, ‘The concept of asylum’ in Guy Goodwin-Gill, *The Refugee in International Law* (Oxford 2007) 355.

85 Elspeth Guild, ‘Criminalisation of migration in Europe: Human rights implications’ (2010) Council of Europe <<https://www.refworld.org/docid/4b6a9fef2.html>> accessed 7 June 2020.

86 Maria-Teresa Gil-Bazo, ‘The Charter of Fundamental Rights of the European Union and the right to be granted asylum in the Union’s

requirements, as well as 'active' tactics such as maritime interception, carrier fines prevent travel by anyone without prior authorisation – including those seeking protection – and outsource border control to the private sector.<sup>87</sup> In conjunction with domestic detention regimes for unauthorised entrants, these policies act to criminalise migration, with worrying consequences for refugee rights. Importantly, they also fuel recourse to people smugglers, since when access to the legal global mobility infrastructure is restricted, a "shadow mobility infrastructure" will inevitably grow to fill the vacuum.<sup>88</sup>

In the UK, people who arrive with a smuggler – like many of those encountered by the volunteers whose testimonies are analysed in Chapter Three – are at risk of being criminalised. Smugglers actively encourage clients to destroy their identity documents before arrival, to make return more administratively difficult.<sup>89</sup> But in the UK, failing without reasonable excuse to produce a valid passport during an asylum interview is a criminal offence,<sup>90</sup> while possessing false immigration or travel documents is punishable by up to 10 years in prison.<sup>91</sup> As a result, people who have been blocked from entering the UK in an authorised manner to claim asylum due to policies like carrier fines instead pay smugglers to facilitate their journeys, and in many cases will destroy their documents and therefore become subject to laws that criminalise entry using false documentation, or no documentation at all.

Article 31 of the Refugee Convention explicitly exempts from prosecution refugees who enter a territory in an "illegal" manner to seek protection. Furthermore, although the text of the Convention stipulates that arrivals must come directly from a place where they were at risk in order to be exempt from prosecution, there is a strong basis in the *Travaux Préparatoires* of the Convention, as well as precedent in practice, for this exemption to extend to all presumptive refugees – that is, anyone who claims asylum and is awaiting a determination of that claim.<sup>92</sup> In the UK, though, people seeking asylum can be and are prosecuted for arriving using false documents. In one case, a Syrian asylum-seeker who arrived on a false Canadian passport was on arrival immediately charged and later convicted of travelling on false documents.<sup>93</sup> He was two months into a one-year sentence when he was granted refugee status, but still had to serve the rest of his term in prison.

Government officials have defended these policies, and insisted not only that those travelling on false documents should be criminalised, but that caseworkers should be able to refuse an asylum-seeker's claim because of a prosecution for false documents. Speaking in 2004, then-Immigration Minister Beverley Hughes said that "on some occasions we would want to know the outcome of criminal proceedings [for travelling on false documents] before deciding an immigration claim, [because] prosecution might provide for the refusal of the claim on the grounds of character or conduct."<sup>94</sup>

Legislation like this represents, it is argued, the pinnacle of what Bowling and Westenra call "crimmigration"<sup>95</sup> – the blending of criminal and immigration law, or the application of criminal sanctions to violations of immigration rules – and introduces vicious circularity to the UK's immigration system. External controls enforced by non-state actors severely restrict safe and legal routes to the UK, compelling people to travel unauthorised, and often with false or no documents. (Presumptive) refugees impacted by these external border controls may later find that because of how they travelled to the UK to claim protection, they are unable to access protection, because of a criminal sanction for an immigration violation. Those who are denied protection for this reason but choose to remain in the UK will then become vulnerable to the whole gamut of policies that make up the hostile environment.

### 4.3 Caught in the same web

As seen above, long-established restrictions on arrivals are essential to the hostile environment, since a system aimed

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law' (2008) 3 Refugee Survey Quarterly 33, 33.

87 Jascha Galaski, 'Ever wondered why refugees don't take the plane?' *Liberties.eu* (10 December 2018) [5] <<https://www.liberties.eu/en/news/why-refugees-do-not-take-the-plane/16529>> accessed 7 June 2020.

88 Thomas Spijkerboer, 'The global mobility infrastructure: Reconceptualising the externalisation of migration control' (2018) 4 *European Journal of Migration and Law* 452, 461.

89 Appendix C.

90 Asylum and Immigration Act 2004, chap 19, art 2.1.

91 Home Office, 'Appendix B – Immigration offences' (2012) [26] [https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment\\_data/file/255350/sponsorguideappBfrom060412.pdf](https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/255350/sponsorguideappBfrom060412.pdf) accessed 7 June 2020.

92 Guy Goodwin-Gill, 'Article 31 of the 1951 Convention relating to the Status of Refugees: Non-penalisation, Detention and Protection' (2001) UNHCR [8] <<https://www.unhcr.org/3bdcdf164.pdf>> accessed 7 June 2020.

93 Diane Taylor, 'Syrian refugee jailed in UK for using false papers' (24 August 2013) *The Guardian* <<https://www.theguardian.com/uk-news/2013/aug/24/syrian-refugee-jailed-uk>> accessed 7 June 2020.

94 ILPA, 'ILPA Ministerial Statements Asylum and Immigration (Treatment of Claimants etc.) Act 2004' (29 April 2004) [12] <<http://www.ilpa.org.uk/resources.php/13272/ilpa-ministerial-statements-asylum-and-immigration-treatment-of-claimants-etc.act-2004>> accessed 20 July 2019.

95 Bowling and Westenra (n46).



at encouraging departures can only function in conjunction with a separate but linked system to control who arrives in the first place. Here, we look at the post-arrival situation for those with a protection claim, highlighting policies that restrict the rights of refugees and asylum-seekers in ways that mirror the restrictions imposed on undocumented people by hostile environment policies. These are restrictions to which non-citizen visitors to the faith-based spaces considered in Chapter Three are subject, whether they have advanced a claim for protection or not.

The first is the restriction on the right to work. Undocumented people are prohibited from working in the UK. Asylum-seekers, likewise, are generally not permitted to work, unless they have already waited over 12 months for a determination on their claim and take up work on the Shortage Occupation List. This is a list compiled by government-appointed economists and comprising mainly highly technical and specialised professions.<sup>96</sup> The vast majority who are not permitted to work are entitled to £37.75 per week, as at June 2020, while they await a determination of their claim. This level of support was described by one woman, who waited eight years before being granted asylum, as like “being placed in a black hole.”<sup>97</sup> Facing this, many asylum-seekers without the right to work choose to do so anyway.

Anyone who employs such asylum-seekers faces the same sanctions for employing them as they do for undocumented migrants: a jail sentence of up to 5 years and an unlimited fine.<sup>98</sup> However, employers can avoid some financial penalties if they cooperate with the Home Office,<sup>99</sup> for instance by helping to facilitate raids on the workplace by immigration enforcement teams. Since both asylum-seekers and undocumented migrants are barred from working, both groups are liable to be caught up in such raids.

In 2018 Mustafa Dawood, a Sudanese man who had claimed asylum three years earlier because of persecution for his ethnicity, died after fleeing an immigration raid at the car wash where he had been working without permission.<sup>100</sup> The fact that he had lodged a protection claim did nothing to differentiate him from others at his workplace with precarious immigration status, who may not have claimed asylum and were also working without permission. Nor, presumably, did it make Mr Dawood feel protected from the immigration officers who raided his workplace. His tragic death shows that the conditions to which asylum-seekers are subjected – enforced near-destitution and prohibition from working – mean that in practice they are placed on the same continuum as undocumented migrants and are just as vulnerable to practices like workplace raids.

A second key policy that leaves asylum-seekers and other categories of migrant with similar rights is the so-called ‘safe return review.’ People recognised as refugees in the UK are granted 5 years of leave, subject to certain conditions. Subsequently, they must apply for Indefinite Leave to Remain (ILR), a more stable status which can nevertheless still be revoked under certain circumstances. When applying for ILR after 5 years, the refugee is subject to a ‘safe return review,’ where decision-makers assess whether the reason for flight persists. Decision-makers also assess whether the original grant of asylum was correct, revising the entire decision-making process, with the grant of protection liable to be revoked.<sup>101</sup>

Article 1C of the Convention does provide for the cessation of refugee protection based on a reassessment of circumstances in the country of nationality.<sup>102</sup> However, when the safe return review policy came to light in 2017, NGOs warned that refugees who fear going through the asylum process again – whether or not they are granted further leave – will fail to apply, and risk falling out of status and into the hostile environment.<sup>103</sup>

Official guidance on this policy bears out these fears, stating that “where an individual with refugee status leave does not apply for settlement before their current leave expires or does not apply for further leave at all, they become

96 Sara Palacios Arapiles and Roda Madziva, ‘A dignified standard of living’ for asylum-seekers? An analysis of the UK’s labour market restrictions for asylum-seekers’ (2017) *Refugee Review* 65, 72.

97 Salani Mutseyami, ‘The UK’s brutal asylum system I had to endure, not Brexit, must be Theresa May’s legacy’ *Huffington Post* (20 June 2019) [8] <[https://www.huffingtonpost.co.uk/entry/theresa-may-hostile-environment\\_uk\\_5d0b4b2ee4b06ad4d25b8960](https://www.huffingtonpost.co.uk/entry/theresa-may-hostile-environment_uk_5d0b4b2ee4b06ad4d25b8960)> accessed 7 June 2020.

98 Home Office, ‘Full guide for employers on preventing illegal working in the UK’ (October 2013) 44-45 <[https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment\\_data/file/304793/full-guide-illegal-working.pdf](https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/304793/full-guide-illegal-working.pdf)> accessed 7 June 2020.

99 Katie Bales, ‘Immigration raids, employer collusion and the Immigration Act 2016’ (2017) 2 *Industrial Law Journal* 279, 284.

100 Jordan Davies, ‘“Desperate” asylum seekers work illegally while appealing’ *BBC* (8 August 2018) <<https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-wales-45100120>> accessed 7 June 2020.

101 Home Office, ‘Asylum policy instruction – Settlement protection’ (2 February 2016) [18] <[https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment\\_data/file/497326/settlement\\_protection\\_v4.0\\_EXT.pdf](https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/497326/settlement_protection_v4.0_EXT.pdf)> accessed 7 June 2020.

102 David Milner, ‘Exemption from Cessation of Refugee Status in the Second Sentence of Article 1C(5)/(6) of the 1951 Refugee Convention’ (2004) 1 *International Journal of Refugee Law* 91.

103 Safya Khan-Ruf, ‘Home Office pressured to reverse refugee ‘safe return’ policy’ *HOPE Not Hate* (27 April 2017) <<https://www.hopenothate.org.uk/2017/04/27/home-office-pressured-reverse-refugee-safe-return-policy/>> accessed 7 June 2020.

an overstayer.”<sup>104</sup> From this moment on, all of the restrictions of the hostile environment begin to apply. Mindful of the fact that refugee status is declaratory rather than constitutive, guidance is careful to note that “although a refugee does not cease to be a refugee when their leave expires, they can no longer benefit from any conditions that accompanied the grant of leave.”<sup>105</sup> But just a month after the lapse of the 5 years of refugee leave, caseworkers are encouraged to “consider withdrawing status, and possible enforcement action and removal.”<sup>106</sup> These rules, and the inflexibility with which caseworkers are told to enforce them, render even refugee status precarious, with holders at risk of losing their status if they fail to make the correct application at the correct time, and thus becoming subject to hostile environment measures.

Those who do apply in time must apply for Indefinite Leave to Remain (ILR) in the same way as other people who have completed five years’ residence in the UK. When considering refugees’ eligibility to remain in the UK after 5 years, caseworkers consider applications according to the General Grounds for Refusal, used to assess all applications for ILR, no matter the current status of the applicant.<sup>107</sup> One of these grounds is an outstanding debt owed to the government. Since 2016, caseworkers have been encouraged to refuse ILR applications from anyone (with any type of status) who has outstanding NHS debts of £500 or more.<sup>108</sup>

One refugee set up a fundraising page to help pay NHS debts in order to apply for ILR. The accompanying text highlights how keenly the threat of the cessation of protection because of NHS charges – a key plank of the hostile environment – can be felt by refugees. Being granted ILR, they wrote, “would give me hella freedom compared to what I have now – I [wouldn’t] have to be scared of being arrested or deported every minute... The alternative is very scary. I can be refused settlement and be deported. It’s real.”<sup>109</sup> The precarious nature of the protection offered to refugees is brought to the fore here, as is the fear of removal because of hostile environment measures, in this case data-sharing between the Department of Health and the Home Office. From official guidance on these two policies – restrictions on the right to work and the termination of refugee leave – as well as individuals’ lived experience, it appears that certain policies act to restrict the rights of refugees and undocumented migrants in similar ways. The next section focuses on how generalised anti-migrant rhetoric associated with the hostile environment has also inevitably affected all sectors of the migrant population, as well as British citizens of colour. The policies described above combine, it is argued, with the rhetoric analysed below to render the faith-based space “the last bastion” of migrants with all kinds of status<sup>110</sup> – until, that is, they also became an arena for immigration enforcement.

#### 4.4 ‘Go Home?’: The anti-migrant rhetoric of the hostile environment

While the hostile environment is embodied in policies like some of those detailed above, it also has, it is argued here, a symbiotic relationship with rising levels of overt anti-migrant sentiment in society at large. As Jones et al argue, “domesticated bordering increases suspicion and fear of the (potentially irregular) migrant and carries these into everyday personal interactions.”<sup>111</sup> That figure of the “potentially irregular” migrant includes those with refugee status, those seeking asylum, those who are undocumented and British-citizen people of colour. Amid rising levels of anti-migrant sentiment – and indeed of anti-migrant rhetoric coming directly from state officials – suspicion of the ‘other’ is compounded by the fact that public understanding of migration law and terminology is extremely low,<sup>112</sup> meaning that different legal categories have little weight in practice. As Lucee, a refugee from Sierra Leone, noted when describing racist attacks in the area where she was living, “these are people who obviously didn’t care whether I’ve got my stay or not...every time they’ve seen me they’ve always told me to go back to my country.”<sup>113</sup>

104 Home Office, ‘Refugee leave’ (2 March 2017) 11 <[https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment\\_data/file/597990/Refugee-Leave-v4.pdf](https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/597990/Refugee-Leave-v4.pdf)> accessed 7 June 2020.

105 Home Office (n99) 13.

106 Ibid., 14.

107 Home Office, ‘General grounds for refusal – Section 4 or 5: considering leave to remain’ (11 January 2018) <[https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment\\_data/file/674001/GGFR-Section-4-v29.0EXT.PDF](https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/674001/GGFR-Section-4-v29.0EXT.PDF)> accessed 7 June 2020.

108 Home Office, ‘Immigration rules part 9: grounds for refusal’ (25 February 2016) <<https://www.gov.uk/guidance/immigration-rules/immigration-rules-part-9-grounds-for-refusal>> accessed 7 June 2020.

109 Ira Putilova, ‘Help Ira get permanent leave to remain’ *GoFundMe* (15 May 2019) [9] <<https://www.gofundme.com/f/help-ira-get-indefinite-leave-to-remain>> accessed 7 June 2020.

110 Refugee and Migrant Forum of East London (RAMFEL), ‘RAMFEL’s adventures at the Home Office and Operation Skybreaker’ *RAMFEL Speaks Out* (22 July 2014) [16] <<http://ramfelspeaksout.blogspot.com/2014/07/ramfels-adventures-at-home-office-and.html>> accessed 7 June 2020.

111 Hannah Jones et al, *Go Home?: The Politics of Immigration Controversies* (Manchester University Press 2017) 6.

112 British Future, ‘National conversation on immigration’ (September 2018) 59 <<http://nationalconversation.uk/wp-content/uploads/2018/09/FINAL-2-national-conversation-september-report-2018-09-final.pdf>> accessed 7 June 2020.

113 Jones et al (n111) 1.



Generalised anti-migrant attitudes like those Lucee faced are of course nothing new – but the state’s role in actively projecting anti-migrant rhetoric *into* communities does appear to be a novel element of the hostile environment. The most notorious example of this is the so-called ‘Go Home’ vans. Vans emblazoned with the message ‘In the UK illegally? Go home or face arrest’ were driven around 3 London boroughs in 2013. The Home Office claimed the pilot scheme aimed to save taxpayer money by encouraging voluntary departures through publicising “safe routes of approaching the Home Office...without the fear of arrest.”<sup>114</sup> However, the threatening language used, and the accompanying image of a large pair of handcuffs, would appear to undermine the Home Office’s stated aim for the scheme.



Figure 1: A ‘Go Home’ van

This campaign, which was heavily criticised as soon as it began, affected people seeking protection as well as undocumented people. K, an anonymous refugee who was seeking asylum at the time, recalled it as such: “I remember the day I saw a photo of those godforsaken vans, and they were talking to me too. I was so distressed. I couldn’t go out of my flat for more than a week.”<sup>115</sup> Much like other more specifically policy-related aspects of the hostile environment explored above, her testimony suggests that while this negative rhetoric may not have been ostensibly aimed at refugees and asylum-seekers, it nevertheless had an impact on them. Further, according to this refugee’s experience, the impact of the hostile environment on asylum-seekers was not accidental but intentional, with one explicit aim: “to make you feel miserable so you would give up.”<sup>116</sup> And as we’ve seen, those asylum-seekers who do ‘give up’ and withdraw their claims can do so by requesting voluntary return, in the same way as the undocumented migrants ostensibly targeted by schemes like the ‘Go Home’ vans and other hostile environment policies.

#### 4.5 Suspicion of the ‘(potentially irregular) migrant’

Figures suggest that the ‘Go Home’ vans did not spur a significant increase in the number of voluntary returns, with just 11 people saying they approached the Home Office for voluntary return after seeing the vans or media coverage of the scheme.<sup>117</sup> However, they were accompanied by an increase in the number of allegations submitted by members of the public about people thought to be in the UK without status. Figure 2 shows that between Q4 2012 (when data on allegations made by the public began to be collected) and Q2 2017, the period that saw the highest number of allegations submitted by members of the public was Q3 of 2013, which coincides with the roll-out of the ‘Go Home’ pilot.

<sup>114</sup> Home Office, ‘Operation Vaken: Evaluation report – October 2013’ (31 October 2013) 2 <[https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment\\_data/file/254411/Operation\\_Vaken\\_Evaluation\\_Report.pdf](https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/254411/Operation_Vaken_Evaluation_Report.pdf)> accessed 7 June 2020.

<sup>115</sup> Appendix G, 2.

<sup>116</sup> Ibid.

<sup>117</sup> Home Office (n114) 13.

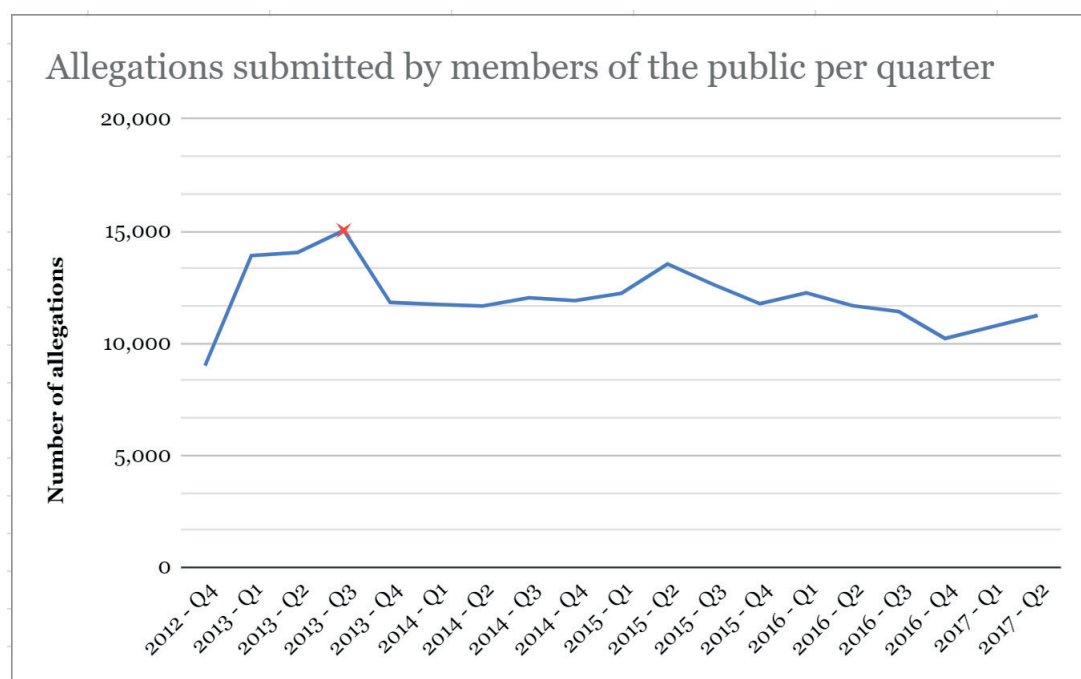


Figure 2: Allegations of immigration law violations submitted by the public<sup>118</sup>

As we've seen, hostile environment policies compel certain non-state actors like private landlords to check the immigration status of others. However, while landlords can face civil penalties for failing to carry out checks, or for renting to someone who fails a check, there is no statutory obligation to report people who fail a status check to the Home Office.<sup>119</sup> So even with the outsourcing of immigration enforcement under hostile environment policies like right to rent and right to work checks, non-state actors do not have statutory obligations to report suspected violations of immigration law.

Nevertheless, figures obtained through an FOI request<sup>120</sup> show that between Q4 2012 and Q2 2017, over 12,000 allegations were submitted per quarter on average, equivalent to over 130 per day. As noted, the high during that period coincided with the 'Go Home' vans campaign – 15,033 allegations were submitted by the public between July and September of 2013, when the pilot was underway.<sup>121</sup> That these allegations were submitted by members of the public with no statutory duty to report suspected immigration offences suggests that, under the hostile environment, "suspicion and fear of the (potentially irregular) migrant" has indeed crept into all aspects of everyday life,<sup>122</sup> with real-life consequences for everyone in society.

As the ICIBI reports, the state has "actively" encouraged the public to report people suspected of being undocumented since at least 2010.<sup>123</sup> The tactic is part of a Home Office drive to become intelligence-led in response to budgetary pressures.<sup>124</sup> In 2011, the then Prime Minister David Cameron spoke of plans to "get a grip on immigration in our country,"<sup>125</sup> saying: "I want everyone in the country to help with this, including by reporting suspected illegal immigrants to our Border Agency. Together I do believe we can reclaim our borders and send illegal immigrants home."<sup>126</sup> That the state encourages citizens to report suspected violations of immigration law, in order to pursue a

118 Home Office, 'Re: Freedom of Information – 45018' (31 August 2017) <[https://www.whatdotheyknow.com/request/424946/response/1029857/attach/3/FOI%2045018%20Response.pdf?cookie\\_passthrough=1](https://www.whatdotheyknow.com/request/424946/response/1029857/attach/3/FOI%2045018%20Response.pdf?cookie_passthrough=1)> accessed 7 June 2020.

119 Alexander Bellis and David Foster, 'Right to rent: private landlords' duty to carry out immigration status checks' 2019 House of Commons Library 7 <<https://researchbriefings.parliament.uk/ResearchBriefing/Summary/SN07025#fullreport>> accessed 7 June 2020.

120 Home Office, (n118) and Appendix C for full data.

121 Ibid.

122 Jones et al (n111) 6.

123 ICIBI, 'Preventing and detecting immigration and customs offences: A thematic inspection of how the UK Border Agency receives and uses intelligence: October – December 2010' (21 January 2011) 9 <[https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment\\_data/file/545895/Preventing-and-detecting-immigration-and-customs-offences\\_2011.pdf](https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/545895/Preventing-and-detecting-immigration-and-customs-offences_2011.pdf)> accessed 7 June 2020.

124 Ibid., 3.

125 Cabinet Office, 'Prime Minister's speech on immigration' (10 October 2011) [2] <<https://www.gov.uk/government/speeches/prime-ministers-speech-on-immigration>> accessed 7 June 2020.

126 Ibid., [38].

budget-driven returns agenda, suggests that the hostile environment can be understood within a wider neoliberal agenda, neoliberalism being a doctrine whereby responsibility for previously state-controlled domains is outsourced to private citizens to realise financial savings.<sup>127</sup>

As part of these efforts, the Home Office introduced an online form in August 2013 allowing people to make allegations completely anonymously, including to report violations of immigration law that have not yet taken place.<sup>128</sup> People encourage others to report in online forums,<sup>129</sup> and one online newspaper even made a video embedded into an article about immigration arrests informing readers of how to submit allegations.<sup>130</sup>

Yet despite spending years encouraging members of the public to submit these allegations, ministers have acknowledged that the quality of data received from the public is extremely low<sup>131</sup> – in other words, that allegations are often made against people who in fact have leave to remain. During 2017 and 2018 for example (when all the legislative and rhetorical elements of the hostile environment were in place, following the implementation of the Immigration Act 2016), over 16,000 allegations were submitted by members of the public every quarter on average.<sup>132</sup> Of these, just 7.4% led to enforcement action by the Home Office.<sup>133</sup> 4.39% led to an arrest and 0.9% ended in a return.<sup>134</sup>

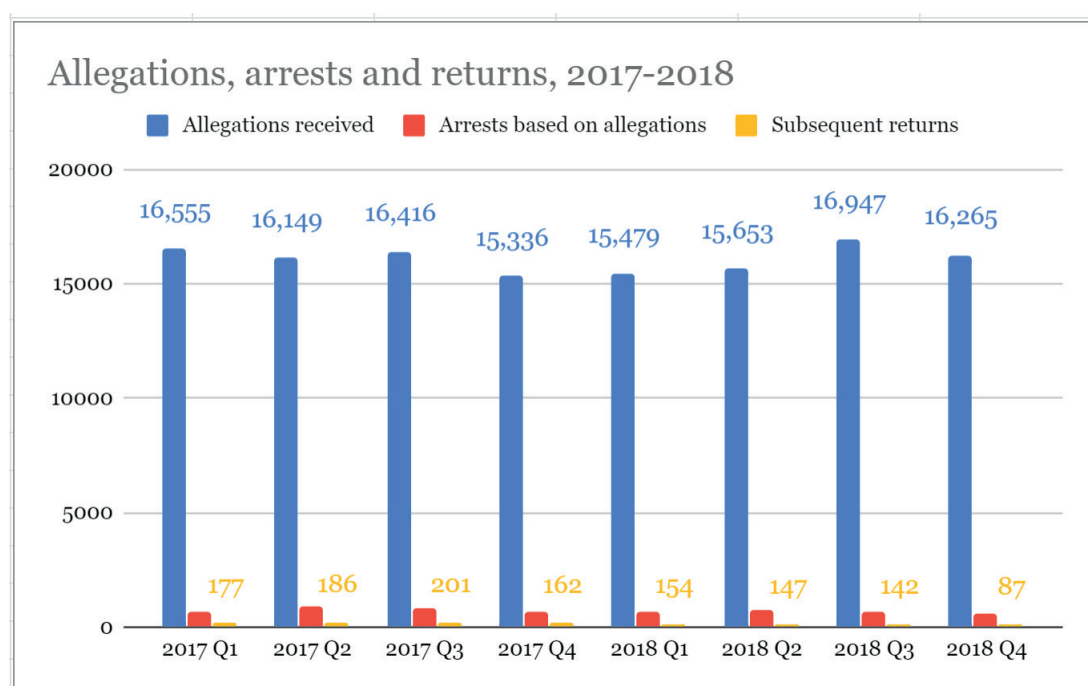


Figure 3: Allegations, arrests, returns

From late 2012 to mid-2017, an average of just under 60% of allegations were non-actionable,<sup>135</sup> meaning that the information could not be used for enforcement action. The Home Office records 6 different categories of non-actionable allegations, with 'no offence' consistently among the most frequent – this is how allegations against people

127 Suzan Ilcan, 'Privatizing Responsibility: Public Sector Reform under Neoliberal Government' (2009) 3 Canadian Review of Sociology 207.

128 Home Office, 'Report an immigration or border crime' <<https://www.gov.uk/report-immigration-crime>> accessed 7 June 2020.

129 Digital Spy, 'Reporting illegal immigrants' (19 November 2014) <<https://forums.digitalspy.com/discussion/2026286/reporting-illegal-immigrants>> accessed 7 June 2020.

130 Emma Grimshaw, 'Three arrested after immigration raid at Taj Brasserie' *Bristol Post* (23 August 2019) <<https://www.bristolpost.co.uk/news/bristol-news/three-arrested-after-immigration-raid-3242339>> accessed 7 June 2020.

131 Home Affairs Committee, 'Letter from James Brokenshire MP, Minister for Immigration and Security, 21 July 2014' (21 July 2014) [53] <<https://publications.parliament.uk/pa/cm201415/cmselect/cmhaff/610/61004.htm>> accessed 7 June 2020.

132 See Appendix B.

133 See Appendix H.

134 See Appendix I.

135 See Appendix B.

with valid leave or British nationals are categorised.<sup>136</sup>

However, it is notable that no specific record is kept of the type of leave that people who are the subject of allegations where 'no offence' was committed are found to have. This was discovered through numerous FOI requests for a breakdown of this information, which aimed to ascertain the impact of the allegations system on asylum-seekers and refugees. These requests were denied because retrieving the data would be too labour-intensive and expensive,<sup>137</sup> since information about an individual's status is stored on a separate database.

Data does, however, suggest that the intelligence on which the Home Office bases its enforcement action is flawed at best. From January 2012 to January 2017, British citizens were more frequently the subject of 'stop and checks' by immigration enforcement than any other nationality.<sup>138</sup> Home Office guidance states that these stops must be based on intelligence, rather than profiling<sup>139</sup> – but the high incidence of stops and checks targeting British citizens suggests that, while the Home Office may be intelligence-led, the intelligence by which it is led is based on profiling, and is deeply flawed.

Since it was impossible to obtain data about the type of leave people who were the subject of 'no offence' allegations were found to have, it is impossible to ascertain the real-life impact that encouraging reporting has had on groups with different types of status and particularly on those with a protection claim. However, the fact that such data is not stored is instructive. It suggests that policy-makers do not measure the frequency of allegations submitted against those with a protection claim, and therefore cannot know the impact this aspect of the hostile environment has on refugees and asylum-seekers.

#### 4.6 The morality of hostility

As explored above, while thousands of allegations are submitted every quarter by people with no statutory obligation to do so, the proportion leading to enforcement action is extremely low. This suggests that, as the ICIBI suggested to the Home Office in 2016, such allegations represent an inefficient way to collect data.<sup>140</sup> The fact that this system for gathering allegations is nevertheless maintained suggests that it is part of a process not just of bordering, but also of *ordering*<sup>141</sup> – that despite its inefficiency and harmful impact, it is maintained in part as a form of social control.

This mirrors the hostile environment as a whole, which was designed without any specific targets or metrics by which to measure success.<sup>142</sup> Indeed, Home Office officials told inspectors it was "unlikely that the strategy of making life and work difficult for illegal migrants would be abandoned, even if it could not be demonstrated definitively that the 'hostile environment' measures had led to an increase in voluntary returns or a reduction in the number of illegal migrants entering the UK."<sup>143</sup> The system is maintained, Home Office managers told inspectors, because it is "the right thing to do."<sup>144</sup>

The implication here is that the measures have been designed, implemented and extended not just for practical reasons, but for moral and political ones too. Bowling and Westenra argue that the hostile environment depends on "[disabling] morality through strong emphasis on the pursuit of efficiency,"<sup>145</sup> with immigration control portrayed as a morally neutral act. However, it appears based on the above that the hostile environment is rooted in a belief that restricting the rights of migrants is not morally neutral, but rather is an active moral good. In the final chapter, we will see how this is reflected within faith-based communities that work with the Home Office to facilitate voluntary returns. Based on interviewees' reflections, we will ask whether volunteers see facilitating returns of people made vulnerable in multiple ways by the hostile environment as the only moral course of action. We will also ask whether,

136 See Appendix J.

137 See Appendix A.

138 Adam Cantwell-Corn, 'Brits most 'stopped and checked' for immigration crimes they can't commit' *Bristol Post* (9 October 2017) <<https://thebristolcable.org/2017/10/brits-stopped-checked-immigration-crimes-cant-commit/>> accessed 7 June 2020.

139 Home Office, 'Arrest and restraint' (12 July 2016) 9 <[https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment\\_data/file/537682/Arrest-and-restraint-v1.pdf](https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/537682/Arrest-and-restraint-v1.pdf)> accessed 7 June 2020.

140 ICIBI, 'An inspection of the intelligence functions of border force and immigration enforcement: November 2015 – May 2016' (21 July 2016) 9 <[https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment\\_data/file/549247/ICIBI\\_inspection\\_intelligence\\_functions\\_Border\\_Force\\_IE\\_July\\_2016.pdf](https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/549247/ICIBI_inspection_intelligence_functions_Border_Force_IE_July_2016.pdf)> accessed 7 June 2020.

141 Yuval-Davis, Wemyss and Cassidy (n39).

142 ICIBI, (n71) 52.

143 Ibid., 51.

144 Ibid.

145 Bowling and Westenra, (n46) 18.

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in this context and with the paucity of options available to people of all statuses accessing faith-based support, the returns that are being encouraged can be considered truly voluntary and, indeed, safe.

## 5. In good faith

### 5.1 A focus on faith

It has been argued above that the hostile environment is a tangled web of policy and rhetoric that impacts on people's lives in multiple ways, both intended and unintended, both measured and immeasurable. What links all of what has been explored above, though, is the outsourcing of immigration enforcement to non-state actors, with the ultimate objective of encouraging voluntary returns, achieving economic savings for the state and establishing immigration enforcement as a moral good. Although it has not been as widely publicised as other policies, the state's focus on faith-based communities as a site of immigration enforcement bears all the hallmarks of policies more typically associated with the hostile environment – further, the fact that work with faith-based communities increased in tandem with the implementation of other hostile environment policies suggests that it is an integral, rather than marginal, part of the wider agenda.

In response to an FOI request submitted by the researcher, the Home Office revealed that it conducted 1,841 “Community Engagement” visits at venues listed as “Places of Worship” from 2014 to 2018 inclusive.<sup>146</sup> The Home Office describes these visits as “surgeries” that provide “a trusted point of contact for those who have entered or remain in the UK illegally but now wish to discuss options to leave the UK voluntarily.”<sup>147</sup> It also notes that all such visits “are conducted with the direct approval of those who run” the host institutions.<sup>148</sup> Figure 4 shows the breakdown of community engagement visits to religious premises between 2014 and 2018.

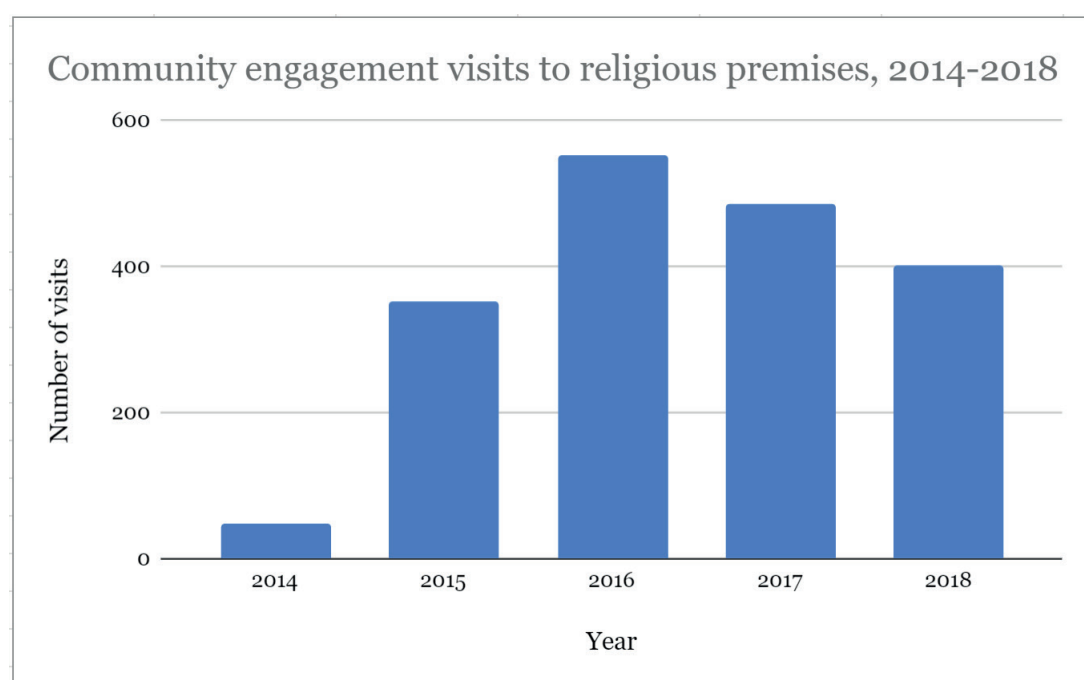


Figure 4: Community engagement visits to religious premises per year, 2014-2018

As shown above, the number of “Immigration enforcement surgeries” held at religious premises jumped from 48 in 2014 to 352 the following year. Data about these surgeries has only been collected in a reportable format since 2014,<sup>149</sup> so they may well have been conducted in unknown numbers prior to that. Further, we know from interviews that other types of engagement with faith-based communities had been underway since before 2014. Of the 4 interviewees featured here, 3 participated in faith-based schemes supported by the Home Office to facilitate returns from around 2012. As MS reflected, this engagement with grassroots groups (which would not be included in the figures discussed above) was pursued when the “active government campaign to target the faith communities” had

<sup>146</sup> See Appendix K.

<sup>147</sup> Ibid.

<sup>148</sup> Ibid.

<sup>149</sup> See Appendix K.



not yet begun.<sup>150</sup>

That “active government campaign” would come later, following a 2014 immigration enforcement pilot programme named Operation Skybreaker, which trialled active engagement with faith-based communities across 5 London boroughs, focusing on “educational visits” to premises.<sup>151</sup> The jump in engagement seen in Figure 4 came directly after the end of this scheme, which was found to have increased the number of voluntary returns at a lower cost.<sup>152</sup> The spike in this newer form of engagement also came in tandem with the implementation of the hostile environment measures introduced by the 2014 Immigration Act, such as landlord checks and tighter restrictions on the right to work. Engagement with faith-based communities shares the hallmarks of these and other hostile environment measures: it outsources immigration control to non-state actors with the aim of increasing voluntary returns. This outsourcing of responsibility is at the core of the hostile environment and is what makes the system so pervasive and insidious.<sup>153</sup>

However, unlike other aspects of the hostile environment, care has been taken not to publicise engagement with faith-based communities. Home Office guidance on visits to religious premises stresses the sensitive nature of such operations, warning that “an operation to enter religious premises must be the last resort.”<sup>154</sup> Officials are advised to consult with and involve local MPs, councillors, police and religious community leaders before undertaking engagement.<sup>155</sup> This wariness may be explained by the public outcry that followed a high-profile 2002 raid on a mosque. During the raid, officers broke down the doors of a prayer room with a battering ram in order to apprehend a couple and their two young children, Afghan asylum-seekers who were being returned to Germany having previously claimed asylum there.<sup>156</sup> The dawn raid took place “in full view of a media scrum,”<sup>157</sup> suggesting that journalists had been informed in advance. The operation backfired, however, sparking protests and leading to significant tensions between the local community and immigration enforcement.<sup>158</sup>

The increase in ‘community engagement visits’ to religious premises also followed more recent outcry over performative immigration enforcement tactics like the ‘Go Home’ vans discussed above, or the Home Office sharing pictures of immigration raids on Twitter.<sup>159</sup> However interviewee GS, who worked as part of a religious umbrella organisation funded by the Home Office to facilitate returns from 2013, believed the move towards more covert tactics was not a reaction to outcry over more public tactics, but was based on financial concerns, saying: “the softer approach – a more dignified, humanitarian approach – has...given [the Home Office] better results at a lower cost.”<sup>160</sup>

In common with other hostile environment measures, then, engagement with faith-based communities outsources some responsibility for immigration control to non-state actors. It is also, as MS noted, “all about returns,”<sup>161</sup> sharing with the rest of the hostile environment package the ultimate objective of increasing the number of returns at a lower cost to the state. And while the Home Office portrays more active immigration enforcement tactics such as highly visible raids and more passive ones like community engagement workshops as entirely separate, they are in fact mutually reinforcing, with the community engagement seen as “key to the creation of a hostile environment.”<sup>162</sup> Engagement with faith-based communities, then, fits perfectly within the hostile environment, in objective and in

150 See Appendix C.

151 ICIBI, ‘An inspection of how the Home Office tackles illegal working: October 2014 – March 2015’ (8 October 2014) 4 <[https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment\\_data/file/547674/ICIBI-Report-on-illegal-working-December\\_2015.pdf](https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/547674/ICIBI-Report-on-illegal-working-December_2015.pdf)> accessed 7 June 2020.

152 Ibid., 16.

153 Sigona (n38) [1].

154 Home Office, ‘Enforcement visits’ (19 January 2017) 28 <[https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment\\_data/file/584655/Enforcement-visits-v2.pdf](https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/584655/Enforcement-visits-v2.pdf)> accessed 7 June 2020.

155 Ibid.

156 BBC News, ‘Public inquiry demand after mosque raid’ (26 July 2002) <<http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/england/2152823.stm>> accessed 7 June 2020.

157 Krysia Diver, ‘Family snatched from mosque fight to survive’ *The Guardian* (30 October 2004) <<https://www.theguardian.com/world/2004/oct/31/immigration.afghanistan>> accessed 7 June 2020.

158 BBC News, (n156).

159 Alex Andreou, ‘Tweeting arrests of ‘illegal immigrants’ is a new low for the Home Office’ *The Guardian* (2 August 2013) <<https://www.theguardian.com/commentisfree/2013/aug/02/immigration-offenders-home-office-tweeting>> accessed 7 June 2020.

160 See Appendix D.

161 See Appendix C.

162 Sita Balani, ‘Operation Skybreaker: When the state co-opts the “community”’ *Ceasefire* (5 December 2014) [7] <<https://ceasefiremagazine.co.uk/operation-skybreaker-state-co-opts-community/>> accessed 7 June 2020.



modus operandi. And as discussed below, increased engagement with faith-based communities makes tactical sense within the rest of the hostile environment, in which such spaces have become the “last bastion” of refuge for migrants of all kinds.<sup>163</sup> It also, and for the same reasons, raises concerns about the integrity of protection available to refugees and asylum-seekers in the UK.

## 5.2 Mixed-status settings

Hostile environment measures – ostensibly targeting only undocumented people – in fact impact on people with a range of statuses, partly because they are implemented in so many settings. Engaging with faith-based communities for immigration enforcement extends the border into informal, mixed-status settings, with similar implications for the safety of people with protection claims, whether recognised or not.

Unlike many other services which migrants access, informal faith-based gatherings like rough-sleepers’ shelters at gurdwaras or church-based drop-ins do not focus on visitors’ immigration status. MS spoke of only finding out visitors’ immigration status over time. In one case he recounted, a man engaging with a gurdwara-based rough sleepers’ shelter frequented by undocumented migrants was eventually found to be a British citizen who had lived in the country for over 4 decades.<sup>164</sup> Other interviewees recalled encountering people with a whole range of statuses: people who had arrived on visit visas and overstayed, people who had entered the country clandestinely and never had contact with authorities,<sup>165</sup> and others who had claimed asylum, been refused and gone “underground.”<sup>166</sup>

Interviewees working in these mixed-status contexts identified some of the barriers to claiming asylum that prevented visitors from claiming enhanced rights and escaping the “Catch 22” of the hostile environment.<sup>167</sup> As NM reflected of the rough sleepers she encountered, “many did not know how to apply for asylum as they did not speak English and they did not want to approach authorities to register themselves, as they feared they would be handed to deportation authorities... The Government kept making it harder to get asylum and the right to remain in the UK.”<sup>168</sup>

This fear of not being believed, of being denied asylum and returned to the country of origin, is seen as a key factor driving people to avoid presenting to authorities and instead remain undocumented, living as best as possible amid the restrictions imposed on undocumented people. Schuster reflects on the calculations that go into taking the decision to remain undocumented,<sup>169</sup> seeing it as a way to reclaim some measure of agency in the face of an asylum system pervaded by a “culture of disbelief.”<sup>170</sup> This is ever more salient in the context of austerity and cuts to legal services – as NM reflected, “homeless people do not have the money to employ immigration lawyers to take up their cases and determine their right to stay in the UK – so the vicious circle continues.”<sup>171</sup> Very few lawyers are able to do high-quality legally-aided work on asylum cases,<sup>172</sup> with funding cuts leading to a 56% drop in the number of legal aid providers between 2005 and 2018.<sup>173</sup> As a result, even those going through the asylum system are potentially vulnerable to exploitation by unscrupulous for-profit legal advisers.<sup>174</sup>

As well as identifying lack of legal advice as a barrier to protection, interviewees at mixed-status faith-based spaces reflected on their own lack of legal knowledge. As GS recalled, volunteers would actively avoid asking visitors key questions including whether they had been trafficked into the UK, saying “we never go into those circumstances – we don’t want to know.”<sup>175</sup> This comment underlines the risks of introducing immigration enforcement into an environment where people of all statuses are seeking assistance from volunteers with little to no training in immigration law.<sup>176</sup>

163 RAMFEL, (n110) [16].

164 See Appendix C.

165 See Appendix D.

166 See Appendix C.

167 See Appendix E.

168 See Appendix E.

169 Liza Schuster, ‘Turning refugees into ‘illegal migrants’: Afghan asylum-seekers in Europe’ (2011) 8 *Ethnic and Racial Studies* 1392.

170 Anderson et al, ‘The culture of disbelief: An ethnographic approach to understanding an under-theorised concept in the UK asylum system’ [2014] 102 *Refugee Studies Centre* 1.

171 See Appendix E.

172 See Appendix F.

173 Jamie Grierson, ‘Lack of legal aid puts asylum seekers’ lives at risk, charity warns’ *The Guardian* (19 July 2018) < <https://www.theguardian.com/law/2018/jul/19/lack-legal-aid-puts-asylum-seekers-lives-at-risk-charity-warns> > accessed 7 June 2020.

174 See Appendix C.

175 See Appendix D.

176 Ibid.

Visitors may have a protection claim – for example, due to having been trafficked into the UK – but have preferred to avoid a flawed asylum system<sup>177</sup> and attempted instead to forge a life in the UK, despite ever-increasing restrictions of their rights. They may find themselves among the people who take refuge in the mixed-status environment of the faith-based space, which as we will see below has become for many the “last bastion” of protection.<sup>178</sup>

### 5.3 Made vulnerable by a hostile environment

Interviewees explicitly linked the circumstances that visitors found themselves in, and their desire to return, to hostile environment policies. GS, speaking about the Sikh Council’s work with destitute rough sleepers from the Punjabi Sikh community, commented: “increasingly...they could not actually get work, because the government had tightened a great deal. If you employed somebody who had no right to work, your company could be fined £10,000 a shot.”<sup>179</sup> NM highlighted how restrictions at the border and within the country worked together to make vulnerable the rough sleepers she came into contact with, saying: “Agents had told [rough sleepers] they could work, but the law had been tightened so that if you employed an illegal migrant you faced huge fines.”<sup>180</sup>

MS, too, directly connected the destitution and desperation of visitors – many of whom had claimed and been refused asylum – to the fact that they had paid thousands of pounds to people smugglers to bring them to the UK, often selling off family land and property in order to raise funds.<sup>181</sup> As explored in Chapter Two, the tightening of external borders has affected all kinds of people who move, pushing people with a protection claim into the hands of people smugglers and increasing the likelihood of their becoming criminalised on arrival. Most people GS worked with had been encouraged by smugglers to destroy their identity documents, so found themselves with no passport, no ability to work and no way to rent accommodation, since “increasingly, landlords will not take the risk” of renting to people with precarious immigration status, due to Right to Rent rules.<sup>182</sup> Local councillor NM summed up the impact that hostile environment measures at the external and internal border had on those she encountered: “no papers, no jobs, no homes.”<sup>183</sup>

The restrictions faced by those with precarious immigration status have led observers to dub faith-based spaces “the last bastion of the destitute migrant” living in the hostile environment.<sup>184</sup> Especially amid budget cuts to other migrant support organisations, part of the wider hostile environment,<sup>185</sup> faith communities have in many cases become the last space of refuge for people without recognised status. Faith-based spaces have thus been rendered a mixed-status sanctuary for migrants of all kinds – and hence also a potential space for immigration enforcement. It is no surprise, then, that the spike in Home Office engagement with faith communities documented above should come just as the 2014 Immigration Act introduced measures that would restrict the ability of undocumented migrants to access support from public and private providers alike. And as we will explore below, the nature of the relationship between and among volunteers, visitors and their shared faith in these spaces means that people already made vulnerable by wider hostile environment measures may be particularly susceptible to encouragement to return, no matter what status they may hold.

### 5.4 Relationships of trust

Though it has not so far been the focus of academic study, the hostile environment’s encroachment into faith-based spaces has attracted attention and resistance from affected communities and allied activists. Much of this resistance has been due to the deeply personal nature of the relationship between visitors, volunteers and faith, and the implications of disrupting such relationships for the purposes of immigration enforcement. As Gupta, a researcher who attended a Home Office advice session at a gurdwara, notes, “religiosity is high among immigrant communities and it was one area of their lives that had blossomed from the lack of surveillance until border agents were placed in... religious institutions.”<sup>186</sup> Interviewees reflected on the trusting and intimate nature of their encounters with people

177 Georgia Cole, ‘Questioning the value of ‘refugee’ status and its primary vanguard: the case of Eritreans in Uganda’ [2018] 124 Refugee Studies Centre 1.

178 RAMFEL, (n110) [16].

179 See Appendix D.

180 See Appendix E.

181 See Appendix C.

182 See Appendix D.

183 See Appendix E.

184 RAMFEL, (n110) [16].

185 Rachel Humphris, ‘Mutating faces of the state? Austerity, migration and faith-based volunteers in a UK downscaled urban context’ (2018) 1 The Sociological Review 95.

186 Rahila Gupta, ‘UK border agents in the house of God’ *Open Democracy* (25 May 2015) 1 <<https://www.opendemocracy.net/en/5050/>

made vulnerable by other hostile environment measures. As MS recalled of relationships between volunteers and visitors at the gurdwara-based rough sleepers' shelter, "there was a lot of love and respect between us. They started seeing us as family and brothers. And we constantly said to them: 'Look, you're on the streets here. It's not going to get any better. The economic situation here, the work laws, the employment laws, everything that exists – your life here is just not going to get any better. Go back to your family...start a life there again.'"<sup>187</sup>

For MS, faith played a key role in motivating him to work with people in his community. Speaking about his gurdwara's rough sleeper shelter, he said he "welcomed it as a Sikh,"<sup>188</sup> describing how the background he shared with visitors motivated him to support them.<sup>189</sup> However, it also played a role in his ambivalence about the voluntary returns scheme. He described a feeling of unease about the impact introducing immigration enforcement into the faith-based space could have on relationships within that space. Recalling seeing immigration enforcement officers arrest people who were gathered outside a gurdwara looking for work, MS said: "That's not the right approach. There are people who have come into the country and don't have legal status – that doesn't mean they're criminals. If you're going to have squads of Border Force agents standing around outside the gurdwara... you're stopping people from coming to a place of worship."<sup>190</sup>

Volunteers were also aware that such criticism came from the wider faith-based community. For instance, GS reflected that "within communities, if you seem to be colluding with the state on matters of immigration...that's never deemed a good thing."<sup>191</sup> He recalled members of the community criticising the voluntary returns scheme, arguing that undocumented people should be offered a chance to regularise their status instead. However, for both GS and MS, their participation in the scheme depended on their conviction that visitors' decisions to return were entirely voluntary, combined with their strong personal motivation to support people with whom they shared a faith and a cultural background. As GS put it, visitors made vulnerable by the hostile environment "reach a point where they just want to go back"<sup>192</sup> – however, as we will see below, the reality of the UK context and the impact of hostile environment measures call into question how voluntary the voluntary returns scheme really is, especially when rolled out in the trusting environment of the faith-based space.

## 5.5 Concerns about 'voluntary' returns

Voluntary repatriation has long been recognised as one of the three "durable solutions"<sup>193</sup> and has represented a preferred option for refugee-hosting states. However, the voluntariness of repatriation from a context like that of the UK – where barriers to recognition of refugee status are combined with restrictions on the rights of those whose status has not been recognised – is called into question by UNHCR's core guidance on voluntary repatriation.<sup>194</sup> Where a refugee's rights have been recognised and they have been allowed to settle in the country of asylum, "their choice to repatriate is likely to be free and voluntary. If, however, their rights are not recognised, if they are subjected to pressures and restrictions...they may choose to return, but this is not an act of free will."<sup>195</sup> This guidance makes it clear that access to asylum in the first instance is a crucial element of safe and voluntary repatriation. Without such protection, and the option to establish a secure immigration status and settle, guidance from UNHCR<sup>196</sup> calls into question how voluntary 'voluntary' repatriation can really be.

In the UK context, the existence of a catch-all web of restrictions geared at encouraging voluntary returns is worrying not only because of the declaratory nature of refugee status and the barriers to claiming asylum, but also because the voluntary returns system is explicitly aimed at people who are actively claiming asylum as well as undocumented people. The Home Office website for registering for voluntary returns is titled "Get help to return home if you're a migrant in the UK" – note the use of the catch-all term 'migrant' – and is open to people who are "in the UK illegally"

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[border-agents-in-house-of-god/](#) accessed 7 June 2020.

187 See Appendix C.

188 Ibid.

189 Ibid.

190 Ibid.

191 See Appendix D.

192 See Appendix D.

193 UNHCR, 'Solutions for refugees' (2011) 178 <<https://www.unhcr.org/uk/publications/manuals/5846d10e7/10-point-plan-action-2016-update-chapter-7-solutions-refugees.html>> accessed 7 June 2020.

194 UNHCR, 'Voluntary repatriation: International protection' (1996) <<https://www.unhcr.org/3bfe68d32.pdf>> accessed 7 June 2020.

195 Ibid., 10.

196 Ibid.

and to those who have claimed asylum but want to withdraw their claim.<sup>197</sup> For those with an active asylum claim, signing up to the voluntary returns scheme means their claim is automatically withdrawn – and once this happens, there is no right of appeal.<sup>198</sup> While no research has yet focused specifically on the relationship between the hostile environment and the withdrawal of asylum claims, Figure 5 hints at a possible correlation.

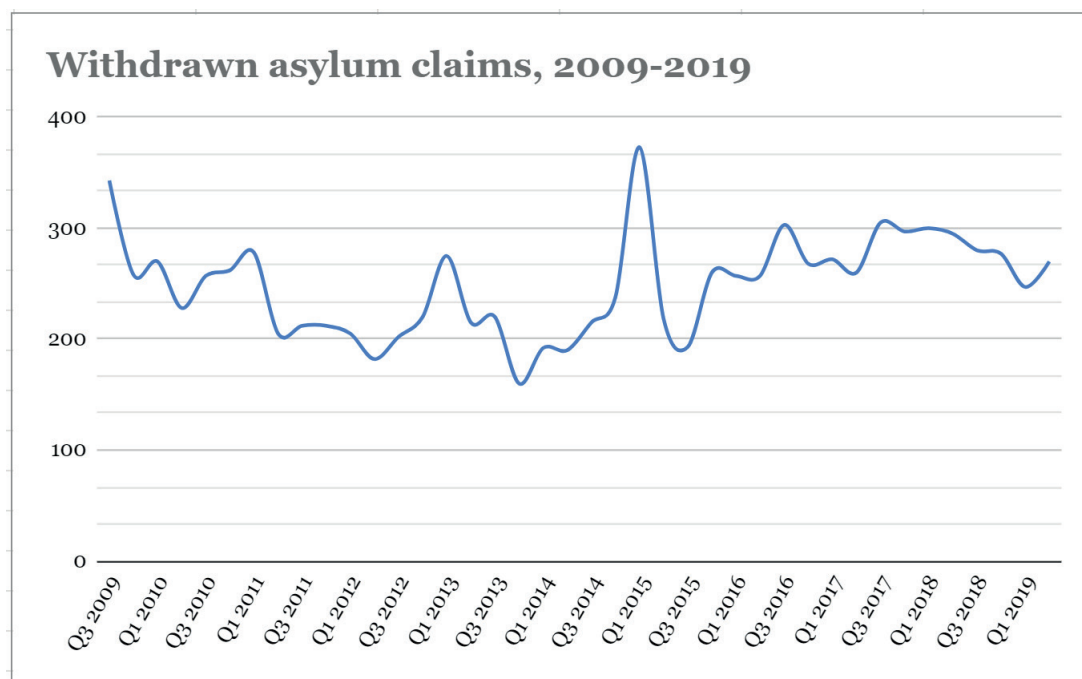


Figure 5: Withdrawn asylum claims per quarter<sup>199</sup>

The Home Office does not disaggregate explicitly and implicitly withdrawn claims – that is, those that were withdrawn as a result of the applicant requesting voluntary return, and those that were withdrawn by default after the applicant failed to attend an asylum interview. As such, the above graph cannot be used to draw firm conclusions about returns of asylum-seekers – however, what it does show is that the introduction of hostile environment measures in 2014 coincided with a reversal of the general downward trend in asylum withdrawals.<sup>200</sup> The upward trend in asylum withdrawals with the onset of the hostile environment, combined with testimonies like that of the refugee quoted in Chapter Two who experienced the Go Home van as an attempt to make her “give up” her quest for refugee status,<sup>201</sup> raises worrying questions about the scope and severity of the hostile environment as it affects those with an active asylum claim, as well as people who have not claimed asylum.

As seen above, the decision to sign a voluntary return form can have serious consequences for an individual’s claim. And although it is illegal in the UK to give any kind of immigration advice without a relevant qualification, volunteers at faith-based community groups were actively encouraged – and indeed funded – to give advice about immigration law as it related to visitors, and specifically about the process of voluntary return. As GS recalled of a Home Office-funded Sikh Council voluntary returns programme,<sup>202</sup> volunteers “do the whole thing,” including obtaining documents from the Indian embassy on behalf of visitors, and liaising with the Home Office.<sup>203</sup> This was the same interviewee who recalled having a policy of not signposting visitors to immigration advisors – instead, visitors who came into contact with this project would have been presented with only one option, by a trusted but unqualified advocate: voluntary return.

197 Home Office, ‘Get help to return home if you’re a migrant in the UK’ (2020) <<https://www.gov.uk/return-home-voluntarily>> accessed 7 June 2020.

198 Gherson Immigration (n81).

199 See Appendix L for full data.

200 Ibid.

201 See Appendix G.

202 Sikh Council, ‘Announcement of Home Office funding’ (10 October 2013) <<http://sikhcounciluk.org/announcement-of-home-office-funding/>> accessed 8 June 2020.

203 See Appendix D.

## 5.6 The (known) risks of return

Voluntary return is a preferred option on cost grounds. However, it is known that it may put individuals at risk on return, even where they did not have a protection claim in the destination country. As the charity Refugee Action, which runs a voluntary returns scheme on behalf of the government, notes, “voluntary return is complex and sensitive,”<sup>204</sup> with individuals who do not appear vulnerable whilst in the UK having the potential to “become vulnerable on return due to a complex range of socio-political and political factors.”<sup>205</sup> Not only this, but it appears that in the UK context voluntary returns are pursued even for members of minority groups where there is a known risk of persecution in the country of return.

Home Office guidance about the small Sikh and Hindu minorities in Afghanistan notes at the outset that it is not possible to ascertain whether local police are willing or able to protect Sikh and Hindu Afghans from persecution.<sup>206</sup> However, despite acknowledging the ongoing persecution of religious minorities in Afghanistan, and the state’s potential inability or unwillingness to protect members of those minorities, the same guidance explores how best to arrange ‘voluntary’ returns of members of these minorities who have sought asylum in the UK. The officials who wrote this guidance interviewed a prominent member of the Afghan Sikh community, asking whether a payment of £1500 would be enough to help Afghan Sikh asylum-seekers voluntarily returning from the UK establish themselves once back in Afghanistan.<sup>207</sup> This interview was conducted in February 2019, just a few months after a deadly bomb blast in July 2018 that targeted the only Sikh candidate running in parliamentary elections.<sup>208</sup> The blast killed 19 people, most of them Afghan Sikhs, and is cited multiple times in Home Office guidance published a few months after the attack, noting that the Sikh community was targeted specifically. News of this attack provides a significant update to earlier guidance, published in 2017, about the situation of Sikhs and Hindus in Afghanistan.<sup>209</sup> The only other addition to the updated guidance, published in 2019, was the interview with the Afghan Sikh leader cited above, and further information about how best to induce people accepted to be Afghan Sikh asylum-seekers in the UK to return to Afghanistan under the voluntary returns scheme.<sup>210</sup>

The fact that the state will continue to pursue voluntary returns of members of groups known to be subject to persecution raises questions about how safe ‘voluntary’ returns really are. It also helps to explain some of the resistance that the interviewees cited here encountered, and their own ambivalence about helping to facilitate returns within their faith-based communities. As critically analysed above, those accessing support in faith-based settings have a whole range of immigration statuses, and include individuals stripped of basic rights by hostile environment policies. In this setting, with a dearth of other options and facing barriers to regularising or claiming protection, the offer of ‘voluntary’ return by a trusted community member with no knowledge of immigration law may be hard to resist, despite the very real difficulties and risks that return can also present.

204 Refugee Action, ‘FAQs: Voluntary return good practice project’ (2017) [3] <<https://www.refugee-action.org.uk/voluntary-return-good-practice-project-faqs/>> accessed 7 June 2020.

205 Ibid., [4].

206 Home Office, ‘Country policy and information note: Afghanistan: Sikhs and Hindus’ (May 2019) 9 <[https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment\\_data/file/803548/Sikhs\\_and\\_Hindus\\_EXTERNAL.pdf](https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/803548/Sikhs_and_Hindus_EXTERNAL.pdf)> accessed 7 June 2020.

207 Ibid., 33.

208 BBC News, ‘Afghanistan blast: Sikhs among 19 dead in Jalalabad suicide attack’ (1 July 2018) <<https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/world-asia-44677823>> accessed 7 June 2020.

209 Home Office, ‘Country policy and information note: Afghanistan: Sikhs and Hindus’ (7 February 2017) <<https://www.refworld.org/publisher/UKHO,,AFG,589c78314,0.html>> accessed 7 June 2020.

210 Home Office, (n203).



## 6. Conclusion

By analysing a range of qualitative and quantitative sources, this work has sought to interrogate the UK's hostile environment, highlighting in particular its potential to impact on people with a protection claim under the Refugee Convention. This has included a focus on what is suggested to be a key, if under-researched, element of the hostile environment: the state's "active campaign" to encourage voluntary returns among visitors to faith-based spaces.<sup>211</sup>

The hypothesis that encroachment into faith-based spaces represents a key part of the wider hostile environment strategy is based on data obtained by the researcher under the Freedom of Information Act. Figures show that the number of Home Office 'community engagement' visits to religious premises spiked from 2014 to 2015, immediately after the introduction of other measures more traditionally associated with the hostile environment, such as criminal sanctions for employers who hire undocumented people. This data analysis was coupled with the reflections of faith-based volunteers who identified hostile environment policies like restrictions on the right to work as direct causes of the destitution of the migrant rough sleepers they encountered in the course of their volunteering. Based on both of these data sources, it is suggested that within the hostile environment, faith-based spaces are now one of the only avenues of support for people unable to regularise their status. Academics working on the intersections between religion and migration have identified the faith-based community as a potential source of coherence and comfort post-migration – arguably, where this effect exists it is magnified by the hostility of the host community and the host state encountered beyond the faith-based space. In the UK context, the available data suggests that these spaces have come to be systematically targeted for immigration enforcement as a key, if under-publicised, part of the hostile environment.

Questions about the implications for refugee protection of the hostile environment in general, and its encroachment into faith-based spaces, sprang from an analysis of the nature of faith-based spaces and an assessment of the barriers facing those wishing to access protection under the Refugee Convention. Restrictions on safe and legal routes to claim asylum necessitate the recourse to people smugglers to facilitate journeys to the UK. On arrival, legislation criminalises people arriving in this way, and can even bar them from accessing refugee status. Once in the UK, interviewees referred to other significant barriers that similarly prevent people with the potential to be granted refugee status from lodging a successful claim, with such people then being categorised as undocumented migrants. Individuals in this position are thus vulnerable to the whole gamut of the hostile environment – and as we have explored, many elements of policy and practice mean that even people recognised as refugees can become subject to the hostile environment, or rights restrictions that mirror aspects of the hostile environment. In today's context, then, "the boundaries between refugees and undocumented migrants are blurred."<sup>212</sup> The reality of this blurring of categories, and the rights ascribed to members of each, is explored here through a focus on faith-based spaces, mixed-status environments in which people with all kinds of status can nonetheless become subject to some form of immigration control.

Such spaces are a microcosm of life under the hostile environment in general, with every member of the community – including people assigned all types of migratory category and British citizens of colour – encountering immigration control during everyday encounters, with a whole range of potential consequences. Seen as such, the advent of the hostile environment highlights the salience of Meissner's "status diversity"<sup>213</sup> approach to exploring the ways in which internal and external borders are experienced by people who encounter them. There can be no doubting the importance of protecting the specific rights afforded to those recognised as refugees under the Convention. However, any analysis of refugee protection in the UK built on the construction of 'refugee' and 'undocumented migrant' as entirely separate categories risks reifying differences that have been shown to hold little weight. Indeed, as this paper has demonstrated, an acknowledgement that people can slip between statuses or out of status altogether is built into the architecture of the hostile environment itself.

Given the indiscriminate nature of the hostile environment and the so-called voluntary returns it is designed to encourage, it is submitted that even using a Convention-focused analytical framework, the hostile environment in general (and as experienced in faith-based spaces in particular) poses a serious threat to refugee protection in the UK. As UNHCR guidance cited above warns, a decision to return taken as a result of restrictions in the host country may not be an act of free will.<sup>214</sup> We must therefore ask how 'voluntary' returns can be in the context of the hostile environment, when the alternative for many – including those who have lodged a protection claim – is enforced destitution. Further, the integrity of the voluntary returns scheme is called into question by Home Office guidance which suggests that returns will continue to be pursued despite the real and recognised risk of persecution and even

<sup>211</sup> See Appendix C.

<sup>212</sup> Webber, (n42) 103.

<sup>213</sup> Meissner (n28).

<sup>214</sup> UNHCR (n194).

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death that returnees, in this case Afghan Sikhs, may face.

Clearly, the limited sample size of this study means that the results cannot be extrapolated. A larger sample size would likely have garnered a greater range of viewpoints and meant that firmer conclusions could be drawn on the basis of respondents' reflections. However, the analysis above raises questions for further research, particularly given the lack of focus on the state's interaction with faith-based communities in existing work on the hostile environment. As the hostile environment becomes further entrenched on one hand, and resistance to it grows on another, the focus should be on exploring the lived experience of people who have encountered some form of immigration enforcement within faith-based communities. This could take the form of an assessment of individuals' migratory histories, motivations for visiting faith-based spaces and perceptions about their encounters with immigration enforcement within them. This has potential to advance the scholarly debate of the intersections between faith and migration and provide a valuable insight into the real-life workings and impact of an aspect of the UK's hostile environment that merits further investigation.

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## 7. Appendices

### 7.1 Appendix A: Attempts to disaggregate data on allegations against individuals with leave to remain

Immigration Enforcement  
Secretariat  
Sandford House  
41 Homer Road  
Solihull  
West Midlands  
B91 3QJ

[www.gov.uk/home-office](http://www.gov.uk/home-office)

[Researcher]  
424946-751b4c9c@whatdotheyknow.com

13 February 2018

Dear [Researcher]

**Re: Freedom of Information request - 46957**

Thank you for your email of 19 January 2018, in which you refined Freedom of Information request **45533** for information about the types of status held by person reported to us for alleged immigration abuses in 2013 and confirmation as to what the 'no offence' category referred to in the previous response relates to. Your query has been handled as a request under the Freedom of Information Act 2000.

Unfortunately it is still not possible to provide the information which you have requested at a cost below the £600 limit. This is because as per the previous request in order to provide this level of detail we would need to take person details from one system and manually check them against another. In the 'no offence' category alone we recorded in excess of 11,000 cases in 2013, so if we conservatively estimated this would take five minutes per case it would far exceed the cost limit.

You also sought confirmation that those in the 'no offence' category relates to individuals found to have some form of leave to remain in the UK. I am able to confirm that they would form part of this category but not exclusively, we may also record persons not subject to immigration control including British nationals.

If you are dissatisfied with this response you may request an independent internal review of our handling of your request by submitting a complaint within two months to [foirequests@homeoffice.gsi.gov.uk](mailto:foirequests@homeoffice.gsi.gov.uk), quoting reference **46957**. If you ask for an internal review, it would be helpful if you could say why you are dissatisfied with the response.

As part of any internal review the Department's handling of your information request would be reassessed by staff who were not involved in providing you with this response. If you were to remain dissatisfied after an internal review, you would have a right of complaint to the Information Commissioner as established by section 50 of the FOIA.

Yours sincerely

**Immigration Enforcement Secretariat**

Source: Home Office [in response to Freedom of Information request 46957], available at: [https://www.whatdotheyknow.com/request/424946/response/1111509/attach/3/FOI%2046957%20Atkinson.pdf?cookie\\_passthrough=1](https://www.whatdotheyknow.com/request/424946/response/1111509/attach/3/FOI%2046957%20Atkinson.pdf?cookie_passthrough=1) [Accessed 21 Oct. 2019].

Immigration Enforcement  
Secretariat  
Sandford House  
41 Homer Road  
Solihull  
B91 3QJ

[Researcher]  
request-490722-ae6da6e7@whatdotheyknow.com

[www.gov.uk/home-office](http://www.gov.uk/home-office)

3 July 2018

Dear [Researcher]

**Re: Freedom of Information – 48989**

Thank you for your e-mail of 11 June, in which you ask for information regarding the 'leave status of individuals subject to allegations of immigration violations'. Your query has been handled as a request under the Freedom of Information Act 2000.

You have asked:

*For allegations found to be un-actionable because the person in question was found to have valid leave to remain during the period 1 - 7 July 2014 (inclusive), please specify what type of leave to remain the individual was found to have.*

Under section 12 of the Act, the Home Office is not obliged to comply with an information request where to do so would exceed the cost limit.

We hold the information which you have requested but we have estimated that the cost of meeting your request would exceed the cost limit of £600 specified in the Freedom of Information and Data Protection (Appropriate Limit and Fees) Regulations 2004. We are therefore unable to comply with it. We do not record 'valid leave' as a specific outcome on allegations received. Therefore in order to provide the information requested we would need to complete a manual search and check of each individuals case history in our casework database. It is estimated each check would take 10-15 minutes and would therefore exceed the cost limit.

The £600 limit is based on work being carried out at a rate of £25 per hour, which equates to 24 hours of work per request. The cost of locating, retrieving and extracting information can be included in the costs for these purposes. The costs do not include considering whether any information is exempt from disclosure, overheads such as heating or lighting, or items such as photocopying or postage.

It is unlikely that any further refinement of the request would make it likely to fall within the cost limit. Please note that if you simply break your request down into a series of similar smaller requests, we might still decline to answer it if the total cost exceeds £600.

If you are dissatisfied with this response you may request an independent internal review of our handling of your request by submitting a complaint within two months to [foirequests@homeoffice.gsi.gov.uk](mailto:foirequests@homeoffice.gsi.gov.uk), quoting reference 48989. If you ask for an internal review, it would be helpful if you could say why you are dissatisfied with the response.

As part of any internal review the Department's handling of your information request would be reassessed by staff who were not involved in providing you with this response. If you were to remain dissatisfied after an internal review, you would have a right of complaint to the Information Commissioner as established by section 50 of the FOIA.

Yours sincerely

**Immigration Enforcement Secretariat**

Source: Home Office [in response to Freedom of Information request 48989], available at: [https://www.whatdotheyknow.com/request/490722/response/1182983/attach/3/FOI%2048989%20Atkinson.pdf?cookie\\_passthrough=1](https://www.whatdotheyknow.com/request/490722/response/1182983/attach/3/FOI%2048989%20Atkinson.pdf?cookie_passthrough=1) [Accessed 21 Oct. 2019].

## 7.2 Appendix B: Number of allegations submitted by the public, and the proportion of which were listed as 'non-actionable'

**Table A – Reports submitted by member of the public**

		2013	2014	2015	2016	2017
<b>Q1</b>		13,911	11,735	12,227	12,250	10,725
<b>Q2</b>		14,048	11,656	13,532	11,673	11,239
<b>Q3</b>		15,033	12,027	12,606	11,415	
<b>Q4</b>		11,819	11,903	11,766	10,210	

**Table B – non-actionable cases**

		2013	2014	2015	2016	2017
<b>Q1</b>		6,570	8,805	7,936	6,883	
<b>Q2</b>		7,862	8,455	8,043	6,570	
<b>Q3</b>		9,029	9,155	7,561	6,349	
<b>Q4</b>		8,311	8,517	6,944	5,237	

Source: Home Office [in response to Freedom of Information request 45018], available at: [https://www.whatdotheyknow.com/request/424946/response/1029857/attach/3/FOI%2045018%20Response.pdf?cookie\\_passthrough=1](https://www.whatdotheyknow.com/request/424946/response/1029857/attach/3/FOI%2045018%20Response.pdf?cookie_passthrough=1),

**Table C – Reports submitted by members of the public, 2017-2018**

	2017 Q1	2017 Q2	2017 Q3	2017 Q4	2018 Q1	2018 Q2	2018 Q3	2018 Q4
Allegations received	16,555	16,149	16,416	15,336	15,479	15,653	16,947	16,265

Source: Home Office Immigration Enforcement transparency data, published quarterly and available here: <https://www.gov.uk/government/collections/migration-transparency-data#uk-visas-and-immigration>

## 7.3 Appendix C: Transcript of Skype interview with MS

[Semi-structured interview conducted via Skype call on 27 Aug. 2018]

MS: Initially, we came in to support an issue that we saw with rough sleepers from the Punjabi Sikh community. And at that point in time, there wasn't an active government campaign to target the faith communities. So we're talking about 2011, 2012 and 2013, those were the 3 years. In late 2013/14 was when we saw it coming, and that's when they connected with the Sikh Council, and we started seeing Home Office – but also whatever they were called then, Border Force, I can't remember what they were called back then – workshops taking place within the Sikh temples, within the gurdwaras. That came late 2013. So when we were involved, it actually hadn't been picked up yet...

[Connection goes]

Hello?

Researcher: Hi, sorry.

MS: So yes, our involvement. In the winter of 2012, a group of young Sikh individuals, we got a call from the local Salvation Army, and they prompted us. The individual prompted us, and got in touch with us. The Salvation Army

were running a cold winter shelter. They got in touch with us to say, "We've got a Sikh man who's sleeping here at the Salvation Army. He needs clothes, and he needs a new turban." So we went down to the Salvation Army to give them a turban, for this individual. And when we got into the Salvation Army winter shelter, what shocked us was that out of the 40 rough sleepers they had, half of them were Sikh, they were from the Sikh Punjabi community. And we got speaking to them, because we didn't actually notice this. We didn't know that there was an issue there. And then we got speaking to them and found out a little bit more about them. And then what we decided, we thought: "OK, they are individuals from our community." We approached our local gurdwara, our local Sikh temple, and said, "Look, we've got a big issue here. We've got a lot of rough sleepers. Half the rough sleepers in the area, in Ilford, in east London, are from our community – so we need to support them and help them." So it took us a bit of convincing, but what they allowed us to do was to trial a homeless shelter to run from the month of September through to February, and give some shelter to these rough sleepers who were out there.

So we opened our doors as well, and we ran – in dialogue with the Salvation Army, we worked in a partnership – and what we found very quickly was that we ended up having 30 sleepers at our Sikh temple as well, coming from the rough sleeping community. Obviously the majority were from the Sikh Punjabi community, but also others from other communities also started arriving as well. So between the Salvation Army and the Sikh temple, we probably were sleeping about 70, maybe up to 80 rough sleepers every night.

Researcher: And that was from September to February?

MS: That was December; we started in December to February of 2011, into 2012 as well. And that's where it began. So that's how the relationship started. And like I said, the majority of our rough sleepers were from the Punjabi Sikh community, but then we also had people from the Pakistani community, we had rough sleepers from Eastern European countries, we had a rough sleeper from Congo, Africa.

Researcher: Was that within the gurdwara building itself?

MS: Yes, we had an annexe, we had a gym, which was an annexe to the gurdwara building, and that's where they slept through the nights. I suppose the most complicated one we ever had was a family – a couple and a 5 or 6-year-old child from Mauritius who ended up at the gurdwara and were homeless. The majority of these rough sleepers, when I say Punjabi Sikh community, I literally mean that they were people who had come into the country through means that weren't legal, and were in a position where they could not return, basically, because paperwork had been destroyed, or they had made a decision, based on advice, to destroy their identity and their paperwork, so that if they were ever picked up by immigration, they would struggle to go back. They would struggle to be identified, to be returned. But what ended up happening was that they ended up in situations which some of them did want to go back, but it was quite difficult. That's a sort of summary of this situation that came about, and that's the backdrop, a bit of an overview of the kind of rough sleepers that we had.

Researcher: So there were all of these rough sleepers... The collaboration with the Salvation Army came about naturally?

MS: It did, yes.

Researcher: Can you tell me a bit about how the Home Office... voluntary returns schemes came about?

MS: Yes. So there was nothing out there that explained to us... We were very naïve and new to this. We were just a bunch of guys from the local area that thought we were doing the right thing. At that time, also, the Salvation Army didn't fully understand... None of us understood the voluntary returns scheme. Whilst we were doing some research, one of the rough sleepers who had joined us was already partway through a scheme. So he had already been at another charity in east London, called the Refugee and Migrant Action Group. They were helping him with his return back to India. And that's when we first found out that there is a scheme out there that can fund and support people to go back. But this individual's story is interesting, because it actually took him more than a year to actually get everything sorted out – I think it was in excess of a year before he actually ended up getting on a flight back to India. The issue then was around bureaucracy, and the long-winded way that the Indian consulate dealt with each case one by one. So these were quite complex situations – you had an individual who literally destroyed all their paperwork when they arrived in the country. Now, all of a sudden, the situation was quite bad for them and they wanted to return. So it was a matter of them proving their existence, having to write back to India, get their relatives in India to find anything that would justify their existence, that this individual exists. And that, in India, is quite difficult, because there isn't a system of birth certificates, there isn't a system that registers births as you have in the West. So it was an exercise that took quite a while, for them to establish that there is something linking this individual back. They had something called a rasha card, which is something that's distributed in India to individuals. They managed to get that. They managed then to get the local sub-inspector of police to verify that this person exists. Once that was all done, it was trying to get that through to the Indian consulate and get the paperwork moving within the Indian consulate. And that in itself can take so long, because this individual would go to the Indian consulate, there would be an issue with his paperwork, they would tell him to come back another day. And months would go by. Now this individual, the way we accelerated this is we wrote to our local MP, Mike Gates, and explained the situation to him. He intervened by writing to the Indian consulate, and we believe that that accelerated this individual's process. He was then provided with documents, for him to then present and be returned back to where he wanted to go, back to his home.

But yes, so the voluntary scheme we were completely unaware of. It was just through chance that we found out that there was a scheme out there. Now our challenge was that although we had roughly 30 to 40 rough sleepers from the

Punjabi Sikh community, who were in a similar scenario, the majority didn't want to go back. They still wanted to stay in the UK, to better their circumstances, and to get out of the situation that they were in. They still were convinced that they could do that. So there was only a handful that ever felt that they were ready to go back. A lot of it is to do with stigma, the social, family embarrassment of going back to their homes as a failure, basically. People had spent life savings to get to the UK through illegal means – because these agents that brought them to the UK in the first place fully exploited them – and they didn't want to go back in an embarrassing way. So that was always the damage. Researcher: Yes, and it's very complicated. Was it something that you advertised within the shelter?

GS: Yes we did, all the time. We would speak to them on a daily basis, so we got to know each individual. The way we approached this was, as we got to know everyone's story, there was a lot of love and respect between us. They started seeing us as family and brothers. And we constantly said to them, "Look, you're on the streets here. It's not going to get any better. The economic situation here, the work laws, the employment laws, everything that exists – your life here is just not going to get any better. Go back to your family, go back to your children, go back to your wife, go back to what you have back there, start a life there again."

And it sounds easy, and it sounds like it would be something they would go for. But some had ended up in addictions – alcohol abuse and drug abuse, which also clouded their judgement. And also when they're sleeping on the streets, judgement is slightly clouded anyway as well, because they don't have the stability to make a decision. You can't make a decision when you're sleeping on a concrete mattress every day. You need something to take you away from that, to make an informed decision. And we were trying to do that whilst the shelter was running. But yes, there were differing circumstances. Some were still adamant that they could change their circumstances, some just weren't thinking straight, were never in the right state of mind to think straight. So it was a scheme that you would think would have a high take-up. I'm trying to think. I don't think we've got any records, but I would literally say that we probably in total, out of almost three years that we ran the shelter, out of that probably only 7, 8 people went home through the voluntary returns scheme. So that's the experience we had.

Researcher: Only 7 or 8 signed up, or went back?

MS: 7 or 8 returned. Some did sign up, but we were a voluntary group of people that were working during the day. We didn't often have the time to follow up, to make sure that they visited the embassy or carried out the appointment, or had met up with the caseworkers that were dealing with the case. So our link to this was a charity called Refugee Action. It was Refugee Action who we would refer the cases onto, and they would take them forward. So it was just trying to make sure that they were turning up to appointments, and that they were committing to that. And I think that's why only 7 or 8 were committed during the whole process. Others expressed an interest, but then they either disappeared, or they didn't come back to the shelter for several days or weeks. It's always been difficult to monitor rough sleepers, because their minds can change so often, especially under the circumstances.

Researcher: You mentioned there was a lot of love and respect between the people who were volunteering at the shelter and the people who were staying there. It sounds like a really nice environment. And I was just wondering how much you think a shared religious faith had to do with creating that bond of love and respect.

MS: It did, it had a huge impact. It was the biggest effect. To be honest with you, it sounds selfish, but our eyes didn't open to the issue of the rough sleepers out there until we saw people of our own community. And I suppose that's not the right thing to say, really – we should have seen all as equal – but it was a bit of a shake-up and a shock for us. And thereon after, for myself, it has kept me connected to the rough sleeping community, whether they are of Sikh Punjabi background or not. But yes, initially it was that shared cultural background, really. And what I did realise as well was that, whilst those individuals were sleeping at the Salvation Army – and I have full respect for what the SA were doing – once they found out that the Sikh temple, the gurdwara, had opened up a shelter, all of them, all the Punjabi Sikh rough sleepers, came to the gurdwara. Because I think it's that sense of belonging still. It's that these people from our home, from our community, who are looking after us. And we did see that, that they all came to us, and it freed up the SA to be able to take up more sleepers on their side, and that's how it helped out both of us.

Researcher: And I can imagine that it's especially crucial to have that sense of community if you don't have legal status, perhaps, and there are all these laws that seem to be squeezing you out.

MS: Exactly, exactly. Some of them, whilst they did have family here, the family were trying to be quite distant from them. When I say family, I'm talking about probably quite distant family, as well. But we did have a death, as well, in our first year that we opened in 2011. Ironically, it was one of the first rough sleepers that came through the door. He was quite a large individual, and once he was sleeping, he suffered from a lot of pain, and one night we had to call an ambulance. And the ambulance took him, and we found out that his kidneys had packed in, basically, and that he was on life support. And he was on life support, probably for several months. And he passed away in March. But the difficult thing for us was to track the family down. But from the other sleepers, we found his family. And then we found out, believe it or not, that this guy had the right to stay in the UK. He'd been in the UK since the 1970s, he actually had a British passport. He wasn't an illegal immigrant. But I think, because he'd been in that environment for so long, he had a drink problem, he wanted to put himself forward as someone who was like that. He was eligible for benefits, he was eligible for so much, but that was his story. We found out from his sister, when his sister arrived. He had a sister, he had nephews and nieces. He didn't get married ever, but his sister was telling us that he had a drink problem, and that was what took over his life. He just never thought straight. So whilst most of them were in the country, you could say illegally, there were also alcoholics with drink problems that were just sleeping on the streets as well, mixed in



with the group. So in a way there was a camaraderie and brotherhood with that community that kept them together. Researcher: So in that case, you acted as his surrogate family in a way?

MS: Well, we tried to track down... Once his family came, they were at the hospital, they would come regularly. We sort of backed away, and let the family take over. He did have a family, he had a loving family. We were a bit judgemental initially, but once we found out his story. He never told us his full story, but once we found out the whole story we let the family take over, and they did what they had to do.

Researcher: And so you said there was a mixed population in terms of their immigration status. Were you aware of just people who were undocumented and people who had full right to remain, or anything in between?

MS: We did find out, as time went on we'd find out what people's status was. So there were some individuals there that did have the right to stay, and were eligible for benefits. And we were able to get two or 3 people onto housing that way. But unfortunately the thing with some of the rough sleepers is that they do end up back on the streets. There was one individual that we managed to get housing sorted for, but several months later he was back on the streets. He's still on the streets now; he's back on the streets again. So some of these are in a bit of a spiral situation, where they keep falling back onto the streets again.

Researcher: Yes, it's very complicated, and I really respect your work that you did trying to combat it.

MS: Well we were fortunate. Obviously we were new to all of this, none of us had any background in understanding this, so we learned whatever we learned as we were going through this. We used to go to work during the day and sleep at the gurdwara shelter at night. We did this in shifts, so you can imagine it took our lives over. It was very emotionally draining and physically draining as well, and it had a big impact in our lives. Whilst we were trying to commit to and carry out this, we had our lives. We all had young children at the time, young families, so it was difficult times. But what was also helpful for us was that other people from our own community, from the Sikh community, the British Sikh community, saw what we were doing; other forms of help also came. So there was an individual who was helping us out with addictions. He was a former alcoholic himself, he had been through the AA programme, and he had developed the programme in Punjabi. So we gave that a go, to help some of the people who had the addictions. And we had another former addict from the Sikh community as well who came and helped us, and spoke about addictions and tried to help the addicts. And we had a pharmacist who was a prescribing pharmacist, and he used to come every week and look at their health. And although he wasn't a doctor, he would still advise and guide and give the medication that would be required, that could be given off the shelf. So we were able to provide health support through that individual. We had a lawyer, a solicitor, an immigration solicitor, who also pro bono would give support and advice. And then we had people from the council from the Sikh community who worked at the council within housing that were able to guide us, tell us, "this is where you need to go, this is who you need to speak to." So when you carry out a community project like this, a lot of that goodwill does start coming out from the community. And the connections also start coming out from the community. So we were lucky that all of that gelled together and provided us with what we needed.

Researcher: And did you have any reactions from, negative reactions from within the community?

MS: Oh, huge. Massive. Massive. And to be honest, that's why it only lasted three years. In the end the temple committee felt that... The temple space is a large space, it's a busy space. You have the worshippers, you have the community coming there. And it was a difficult space to manage, between the two groups, the rough sleepers and the normal worshippers. And there was a security issue, there was a safety issue. And I sympathise with that. I understand as well that it wasn't the right environment. In 2013 we had to, it was the last year, we couldn't do it after that. We had to close the shelter, and then we ended up forming a partnership with SA. Now we work in collaboration with SA, or support the SA as best as we can.

Researcher: Now you have...

MS: There was a lot of backlash from the community – almost saying, "Why are you helping those guys? They have architected their own circumstances, it's their fault. They are alcoholics, they're addicts, they're junkies." So it was all of that. So we had support, and then we didn't have support. So it was a double-edged sword from the community.

Researcher: And did you have any memorable reactions with regard to the voluntary regard scheme?

MS: Yes, the thing is we will always remember the family that we had from Mauritius. The frustration of that one, it took a while, but we ended up having to house that family and pay for it ourselves. My brother had a flat at that time that he used to rent out, and it just so happened that one of his tenants had left. And for three months he let this family stay in his flat. So it cost him 3 months' worth of rent. But that was the only way we could help these people. It was difficult. There was a 5-year-old child involved, and you'd think that would accelerate the programme, or accelerate what needed to be done. But again, the Mauritian embassy getting their documents, getting their papers, and getting back. And you can't... They regretted their decision, but they came into the country, they were supposed to be a holiday

Researcher: Did they come with the child, or was the child born in the UK?

MS: They came with the child; they had very difficult circumstances in Mauritius. I know Mauritius is a paradise, but they were on the poorer side. They were in debt, and were told to come to the UK and there would be work for them, and they would be able to work for some time and then head back to Mauritius and pay off their debts. And that didn't materialise. They came on a holiday visa and they disappeared, and going back was quite complicated for them. It took probably 4 or 5 months in total, to go back. And they weren't in a good situation. They weren't Sikh, they just

happened to find out that the gurdwara could help them. They found out about the shelter, and because there was a child involved we thought we couldn't put them with the rough sleepers, because it's just not safe for the child. So we put them up in a hotel, or a BNB, for a few nights, and once the property was vacant we moved them into the property. But it was memorable because there was a child involved. And they still write to us every so often, tell us about what's going on in their life and their circumstances. Unfortunately their circumstances are still never really improved, but they still hold us in high... They're still fond of us and keep in touch with us. And the other one that was a really interesting, memorable one was actually an individual from Congo. We had a gentleman from Congo who, while we weren't involved with his actual voluntary return – it had already commenced, he'd already started that – he did used to sleep at the gurdwara. And the funny thing is, the day he was getting returned, he came back to the gurdwara. The shelter had closed then, it was the middle of summer. He was returning back to Congo, and we asked him. We said, "Do you need anything to go back?" And he said, "Yes, I just need a favour. I need a briefcase, that's all I want." So I thought, "OK, if that's all he wants, we'll buy it." So we bought him a briefcase, and we gave it to him. And he put some papers in the briefcase, and he just said he wanted to take it onto the plane. He wanted to look important. He was going back onto that plane, and he was going to return to Congo – he just wanted to look important with a briefcase. It was something that was really important to him. He just had to feel that he had accomplished something, even if it was something that was fake, a fake portrayal. He just wanted to land in Congo with a briefcase. So you remember these small things, but it means a lot to those individuals, because they want to go back with dignity. They want to feel like they've achieved something, even though they haven't, to show their family that they have achieved something. Maybe not tell them the full truth and horror of what they went through.

Researcher: Do you know how long he'd been in the UK?

MS: He had been... It had been over 2 years that he'd been in the UK. He'd been sleeping rough for over 3 years, but he may have been here longer. He had been sleeping rough, he said, for around 2 years. But he was an educated individual. You could tell by the way he spoke and conducted himself, he was a man who had held good posts, good roles in the past, you could see that. Hence, he wanted to go home with a briefcase, and that dignity that he's someone important.

Researcher: Yes, and it's so important that you were there to listen to his desires.

MS: Yes, exactly – but when you hear things like that, you understand what it means to the individual. There were some young Punjabi Sikh men that went back, and one of them wrote to us afterwards. He went back, he got married, he was going to start a family, and he was just writing fondly back to the Sikh temple, to say that he always remembers how we helped him. He started helping at the temple where he came from, in his village, in memory or in support of how he was helped here. So there were some nice stories that we heard. People went back and would approach us.

Researcher: I'm kind of losing you.

MS: They're still the same people from 2011 still sleeping on the streets today. So whilst we have some nice stories to share, there are still some of them that are still on the streets, and their circumstances are exactly the same. And they refused to go on the voluntary scheme, or like I mentioned before, they are individuals that are eligible for benefits but they just don't take it forward, so they end up back on the streets. So some of them are still, won't go back on the voluntary returns scheme. They won't go on the voluntary returns scheme – they just don't want to go back. So one example, there was another individual – again, an educated individual – he was a Hindu from India. And he spoke great English, really well-spoken in English. A massive drink problem, though, huge drink problem, in the sense that he would fight, would end up getting into big arguments, he was a difficult person, often. Often we had to ban him because he was so drunk, or so violent. And I remember having a conversation with him. And I asked him, I said, "You're so educated, I can tell from your English and the way you speak." And he was telling me about his 2 daughters, and they are air hostesses in India, and they travel to all different countries. And they come to the UK as well. And I said, "Don't you connect with them when they're in the UK? Don't you tell them where you are?" And he goes, "No, I don't tell them where I am." He goes, "I would rather die on the streets and them get sympathy back home, that their father died in such a way, than go back and say I failed." And that was the sort of mentality that a lot of these people had.

Researcher: Yes, it's really tough. There was one thing you mentioned that I wanted to ask about. The line cut out right at the beginning, when you were saying at the beginning of the conversation, talking about the timeline. So the shelter ran from 2011 to 2013, is that right?

MS: Yes. It did, in the winter months.

Researcher: And it was only in 2014 that the Home Office came into collaboration with the Sikh Council.

MS: Yes, that's correct. But then the Sikh Council... I was actually part of the Sikh Council in 2014, and that's when I was contacted by them about the voluntary returns scheme that they were going to do. So I gave them some advice back then, but because I wasn't involved in it anymore, I did say, "OK, these are the circumstances we came across, this is what we came up against, and these will be the issues." But it was the Sikh Council. And then the Home Office started doing... I wouldn't call it a workshop. But you could call it a workshop – they started doing that in one of the other gurdwaras. Not the one we were involved with, just the one down the road. Again, it was all about returns. So I think, then, that people started realising that there is an issue within the community, and that's where we saw a more active approach by Border Force and the Home Office targeting the religious establishments, targeting the Sikh temples.

Researcher: And the workshops that you mentioned, did they involve...? What did they involve?



MS: I don't know. I didn't go to any of those, because by that time, like I said, we weren't involved. But what I do know is that they were beginning to pick people up. Because you'd get people congregating outside the Sikh temples in the morning, often they were the people looking for work. And unofficially they would gather there, labourers would gather there, and sometimes if they were lucky, it was known for people in the building trade to be able to go past the temple and pick up a few labourers, and go to a building site. So unofficially, people knew that was going on. And what did start happening is there were Border Force turning up in the morning, and picking people up that way. So that got a bit aggressive, there was a bit of local coverage in the paper around that. I spoke against that, as well. I thought, "That's not the right approach. You are scaring people from coming to their own place of worship, as well, especially there are people who have come into the country and don't have legal status – that doesn't mean they're criminals." That's my view, anyway – I don't see them as criminals, but other people may do. But again, if you're going to have squads of Border Force agents standing around outside the gurdwara, it's also not very good for the community.

Researcher: In what way is it not good for the community?

MS: Well I think it demonises the community, as well. You're stopping people from coming to a place of worship. I didn't think it was the right approach, really.

Researcher: But the other approach could be seen as a kind of another wing of the same kind of...

MS: It was, it was. And there were some people who were quite vociferous about it. There was a group in East London – the one I've mentioned which was RAMFEL, the Refugee and Migrant Action Forum. They were really strongly opposed to it, vociferous about it, about the gurdwaras getting involved in this voluntary returns scheme.

Researcher: Did you have any contact with RAMFEL regarding this?

MS: Yes, yes, they helped us. They were the ones who initially connected us to these organisations. That's how we found out, first, about the voluntary scheme, it was through RAMFEL. And we had to work closely, RAMFEL gave us... There was this CEO, the CEO at the time, Rita Chadha; she was a great guide, and signposter, helper, telling us what to do and what direction to go in as well. So we needed leverage of all the information that existed out there and all the knowledge, because as individuals, as I say, we knew nothing of what we were getting ourselves into. We were very naïve. We thought we were doing the right thing, and the rest just happened after that.

Researcher: It's a very complicated area, as well. Not just morally, but also legally.

MS: Exactly. We had no training; we knew nothing about any of the issues that existed. We knew nothing about dealing with addictions. We thought it would be a simple... We were naïve about that as well, and just in general. We survived because it just so happened that the goodwill came about as people saw what was going on.

Researcher: So RAMFEL's opposition was to the voluntary returns scheme, or to the Border Force?

MS: I think it was more to the way the gurdwaras were actually getting involved. And I think the fear was that it's not really a role for religious... I think Rita's argument if I remember, on social media, was that it's not something that faith leaders should be getting involved in. It should be the qualified people who are involved in refugee and migrant work. So I could see where she was coming from, as well. That was her argument, and she did write some strong opposition to it. But only on social media, I don't know if there was any other opposition. Only some of the comments on Twitter, it was Twitter back then, if I remember correctly.

Researcher: And what was your response to that?

MS: I saw from both sides. To me, it was just let's help whoever comes through the door. And I was just glad that the temples, the gurdwaras, the Sikh temples, were taking responsibility. Because when we saw the issue in 2011, we really had to convince the elders that we had a problem, and it was our responsibility. And that wasn't easy. So to see the shift, a few years later, to some ownership around the issue, even if it was supporting and running a voluntary returns scheme, I welcomed it as a Sikh, because I thought at least our faith leaders were taking an active interest and concern in what was going on out there.

Researcher: I'm aware that it's getting late. I just wanted to ask you one last question, kind of around timings again. So by 2014 the Home Office was getting more active in collaborating with the Sikh community, and it's around that time as well that the hostile environment was really starting to kick in, legally speaking, with the laws around right to work, right to rent and right to healthcare.

MS: Yes, exactly. That had already had an impact. The 2011 impact of rough sleepers that started emerging on the streets, things had already... Obviously employment law, housing, all these things had already come into effect. A lot of those guys had already been in the country for at least 10 years, if not maybe even more than that. They had been around since at least 2001 in the country. They had held jobs, they had worked, they had accommodation. But then, obviously, circumstances changed. It got difficult to find work, difficult to find work on building sites, which was the common employment that a lot of these people used to get. There wasn't really any employment, except for around building sites. So that got very difficult for them, and obviously the knock-on effect of that was on accommodation. The loss of accommodation, they ended up on the streets, and so forth. But that all started escalating, or it accelerated, round about 2011. So these that really started taking effect back in 2011.

Researcher: And then it only increased from then on, I guess.

MS: It did. But what we're finding... There was a time when a lot of people, it was desirable to come to the UK. It always has been. A lot of the economic conditions in India, and especially in Punjab, because these people have grown up... The Punjabi community has been a migrant community for over a century, for over 100 years. People have got used to members of their family, people in their village, living outside, and still coming back and having a connection with

Punjab. So some generations, either they've been in the UK or perhaps they've been in East Africa, Malaysia, America, Canada – wherever they've been, anywhere – they've always had this thing that if you did well, that in order to do well you had to get out of Punjab. That's the sign of success. So they've been brought up with that, that at some point in time, if I want to do well, I need to get out of here, earn some money abroad, and then come back and better my circumstances. And they had that impression for a long time. And I think, to be honest with you, we started to think that we need to get the message back to India that things aren't as rosy as you think they are. Just because a few people go backwards and forwards, and it looks like a great success story, in Britain circumstances aren't like that for everyone. And we wanted to get that message back in some way to India. So we were thinking of ways of doing that. Do we do a documentary? Do we commission a film, some kind of short film, or a message to go back to the young people of Punjab, to say, "You could come to the streets here. If you come to Britain, your circumstances might not be as good as you think. Don't pay money to these agents that are going to trick you into coming here." So we managed to get that message. We didn't, but I do think that something over the years has got back to them, because there seems to be less than there used to be a decade ago, or maybe two decades ago, trying to get into the UK illegally. But I think that also boils down to it being less easy to get across the borders, as well. People used to get in the back of lorries, and all those different ways of getting into the country. It's not that straightforward anymore, so I suppose that's also a factor of why there's not as many as there used to be a decade ago, coming into the country.

Researcher: I was wondering whether you see any connection between the tightening of circumstances in the UK and an increase in attempts by the Home Office to work with religious communities?

MS: I think there is, there are. They are looking at ways of ensuring that they are tightening that. And I don't know, in terms of statistics, how many people at that point coming through the borders were actually from our community. But I'm going to be really honest with you, in the underground world of immigrants that are in the country that I know, having been involved in the Sikh community all my life, and in the Sikh temples, there is a significant number of people in this country, especially in east London, within the Sikh community, that are here without the right to stay in the UK. It's not a majority, obviously, but there are large numbers. So I'd say, in east London, we're a community of about 25,000 in total. And out of that 25,000, I'd say at least 2-3000 are people that are here illegally. And that's anecdotal – that's me just putting a rough estimate on it, but just to give you a proportion. So there is a significant underground community that are here without the right to stay.

Researcher: And it's only going to get tougher, I think, with the way things are going.

MS: I thought it would increase a lot more. In the early 2000s, there were new people coming into the country, we started seeing Sikh faces more and more, but as borders got tighter, you see less of that. Less from the Punjabi Sikh community, but perhaps other communities are trying to get in. So I think now, it's probably not many from the Punjabi Sikh community, I think more from other communities, and other parts of the world, that are trying to get into the UK to escape whatever they're escaping.

Researcher: One thing, were you aware of any of the people who didn't have the right to stay having claimed asylum and been refused?

MS: Yes, yes. And often there's lawyers and solicitors out there that would exploit the situation, I used to feel. I think there was bad legal advice, often, to say, "Look, you're eligible for asylum." They would be given a false sense of hope that they would receive asylum. But often, the circumstances... Back in the 80s and 90s there may have been a reason for Sikhs fleeing Punjab, because there was political persecution. But by 2000, that situation had calmed down, so often these circumstances didn't warrant asylum, especially from an area that's not currently going through conflict. So they would be given a false... just given bad advice. They would fall into that trap. They were desperate, so they would try and get hold of money, to pay many of these immigration solicitors. So I was aware, I think one or two of them had tried that asylum route, or had at least explored it, anyway. Not one or two – probably more than that – had explored that route. The way some of them had been trafficked into the country, it was horrific. It's almost like a film, when they would tell us the stories of how they actually got into the UK. Literally through borders right from India, crossing borders through Afghanistan, through Russia, then via Russia into the European countries, then through Germany, right through to the borders as well. So they were getting on a boat, or jumping on the back of a lorry. One individual ended up somewhere in Nottingham – he didn't have a clue where he had to get to. He jumped on a lorry and then he found that he was in Nottingham. Then he found someone who told him where he was, and he made his way to Ilford from there. The way he had to cross borders, the way they were trafficked, he said people had died along the way. He was with Sri Lankans, Chinese, a whole group of them were being brought together as a group. He said that, he told me that the Chinese were too slow, so the person who was bringing them over – who was Eastern European, he was Russian – he shot the Chinese because they were too slow, and they were delaying everyone. So it's horrific, when they tell you these stories. It's like a film, and when you've been through all of that...

Researcher: You'd have to really want to get to the UK to go through all of that.

MS: Yes, these people have put their family's savings on the line. So they've paid £9000, £10,000 to an agent to get them through to the UK. Now that £9/10000 means they may have sold off land, they may have sold off property, they've done what they can in order to get that, so they can come to the UK and earn money that would give stability. But that's why we had to get the message to the people in Punjab, India, that those stories, don't fall for those stories, because those circumstances and those opportunities do not exist anymore in the UK.

Researcher: Well it's now 10.

## 7.4 Appendix D: Transcript of Skype interview with GS

[Semi-structured interview conducted via Skype call on 18 Sep. 2018]

GS: A few years back, there were a noticeable number of rough sleeping people from North India. So they were from North India, they were a mix of Sikhs, Hindus and Muslims. And what they tended to do was to sleep under bridges, in parks, particularly in areas where there was a high concentration of Asians. And one noticeable one was in Southall, which has quite a large north Indian community. And parts of Birmingham. What happened was that there was a TV program – one of the Sikh channels picked it up, Punjab Radio, that was another Punjabi channel that picked it up. And it raised the issue, and people did donate quite generously so that something could be done to support these people who were kind of destitute. And some of them had acquired substance addiction habits.

Researcher: Were the donations made to the Sikh Council, or to local gurdwaras?

GS: Yes, the local gurdwaras were helping quite a lot, by giving them food and sometimes shelter. Some people who had latent properties even allowed use of those properties, so that people could sleep at night. But the scale was quite large, and they just could not cope. There was no infrastructure for supporting people who also may have some substance addictions. But then what happened... And also, it seemed to get [inaudible], in the sense that some of them wanted to return, but there was no mechanism for them to return. One, they couldn't afford the fare, secondly quite often, if they had been trafficked into the country, the agents had encouraged them to get rid of their papers – their passports, and so on. It was actually very difficult for them.

Researcher: Had they been trafficked for work? Or trafficked into the country and then just left?

GS: I think what happened was that an agent in India said, "You give me so much money, and I will take you to the UK." So they would make a very arduous, rough journey – many died on the way – some of them would then eventually get smuggled in. Some came on visas and overstayed, and then disappeared somewhere into the black economy. Most of them found, increasingly, that they could not actually get work, because the government had tightened a great deal. If you employed somebody who had no right to work, your company could be fined £10,000 a shot. So that was a big deterrent for companies. So then it became difficult, really, for the gurdwaras to support them long-term. And even the [charity?] aspect very quickly dried up, because the resource requirement and the infrastructure requirement was huge. So what happened was, I spoke to the Home Office, and I said to them, "Look, if there was a way that people wanted to return voluntarily... I'm not in favour of any kind of compulsory repatriation, we would not support it. But if somebody was in a very rough place, and voluntarily wanted to return, would they be able to assist?" And this was new programme, politically quite sensitive. Very sensitive for us in the community, as well, because some people had a view that rather than looking at voluntary returns, the [inaudible] should be a campaign for some kind of amnesty so that they could stay and work.

Researcher: Was that from within the community?

GS: Yes, that was from within the community. But even now – and at that time – the political will for any kind of amnesty for migrants just wasn't there. Still isn't there. If you look at the whole basis for Brexit, it's linked to immigration, and no political party was going to stick its neck out. So that wasn't forthcoming. But what the Home Office did agree was to give us funding for a pilot, to see whether or not some people could be assisted on a voluntary basis. And that proved quite a huge success, in the sense that people approached us. We had some issues with the Indian consulate, which we managed to overcome. If somebody hasn't got any paperwork, then verification of their nationality has to go all the way back to India, to some village. It takes time. In the meantime, the person is sleeping on the streets, and sometimes they're very ill. It hasn't been straightforward. So that's how the Home Office funding started. It is not guaranteed funding. But so far the funding has allowed us to assist a good number of people in very difficult circumstances. To give you an example, someone had cancer. He was desperate to go home – he did not want to die here, he wanted to go home and die amongst his family. So you kind of get that... There was another one, a guy who slept in a bin, and whilst he was sleeping the binmen came, and they emptied the bin, and he was crushed. So his partner from India... we said why don't you come over for the funeral, we'll raise the funds from within the community. That was proving very difficult, in the sense of he didn't have a passport and so on, so in the end we sent his body back home. And that wasn't from Home Office funding, this is where the community puts their hands in their pocket and helps.

Researcher: That individual, had he come over to work and then not been able to find work?

GS: Essentially. I think all the ones that have come here that we have dealt with came with the desire to work. You're not looking like some Romanian gangs coming from central Europe to pickpocket in central London. It's not like that. These are people with a genuine desire to work and better themselves, really.

Researcher: And do you know... For example in that case, with that individual, obviously he was unable to work because of legislation that penalises employers for employing people without documents.

GS: That's right.

Researcher: Are you aware of any other legislation that had a bearing on his case? The right to rent...

GS: Not on that one. On the... We haven't come across many examples, but we are aware that increasingly, landlords will not take the risk, that we are aware of. But almost all the cases we come across are people who try to work, can't

work, fall onto very hard times, become ill. Sleeping rough isn't exactly the healthiest of things to be doing. And then they reach a point where they just want to go back.

Researcher: And this was in 2012, 2013, is that right?

GS: That sort of time, yes.

Researcher: And so it was initial funding of £60,000, but has that been renewed?

GS: Yes, we asked for it to be reduced, because the volume went down. So you're not really looking at a very large volume of illegals from North India. You've probably got more now from Pakistan, Bangladesh and southern Indian states, Tamils. And then of course you've got other communities, like the Afghans and so on. But from the Sikh community, the number is declining.

Researcher: OK. So it was one chunk of funding, and that was it.

GS: No, we did get repeat funding, but a reduced amount, in the second and the third year. And we were quite happy with that, because the demand had reduced.

Researcher: So are you still receiving annual funding?

GS: Yes, we've got funding for a fifth year now as well. I can't remember the exact amount, as I said we... I don't want to blame the Home Office, because we ourselves have recognised that the demand is declining.

Researcher: And do you think that's because of efforts to do publicity campaigns in northern India to say that the situation for many who come here isn't that great, to warn people off coming. Do you think that's a result of that?

GS: It is, yes. I think there's a lot of awareness now, in India. Somebody's son just died en route – they didn't know where he was, and after very many years they said that actually he had died somewhere in Syria, or someplace other. Sometimes the big channels have picked up images of half-burned bodies dumped by the traffickers en route. And then those that go to the UK go back with their stories. So increasingly the awareness is there that the UK, although it seems to be a preferred destination, it's not the ideal place to risk now. So I don't know whether people are going to other countries or not, but definitely the community in the UK has declined.

Researcher: Do you know how many people have been returned under the scheme?

GS: Off the top of my head, we may have returned something close to 250.

Researcher: No small number. And is the Sikh Council responsible for all the preparations?

GS: That's right, we do the whole thing. We get the papers from the Indian consulate, we liaise with the Home Office here. So we basically do whatever we can, because these people don't even have the bus fare to travel to the Birmingham consulate or the Indian consulate in London. So we literally... There's a lot of hand-holding. Often they don't have the language skills, so we support them through the process.

Researcher: And so were these all overstayers, or people who had managed to enter without any kind of documents?

GS: I'm sorry, I missed that.

Researcher: Do you know the immigration status of the people who have been involved with the programme.

GS: Mm-hm. Yes, they were illegals. They were illegals in this country.

Researcher: Do you know if they were overstayers, or...

GS: It's a mixture. Some are overstayers, and some just genuinely got smuggled in somehow.

Researcher: Are you aware of any who had claimed asylum?

GS: I think the asylum applications have also declined, because from the Sikh community there was a surge in asylum applications, and that was genuine, because of the persecution in India. And this was over a period between 1984 to 1997. And so you did used to get political asylum applications – some were successful, others weren't. But not now, you don't see that nowadays. It's a rare occurrence, a political asylum application.

Researcher: And you... I wanted to ask a bit about faith and what role it plays. Do you see it, personally, as a motivating factor for your involvement?

GS: Yes, yes. Well I think, within the Sikh faith, there's a very strong ethos of humanitarian work and voluntary work. So that's part of it, and the other part, I guess, is when you see people from your own community... Sikhs have a tradition – we don't beg. You don't find a Sikh beggar in India, for example, like you'd see from other communities. And if there ever is one, there's a huge community reaction to that. So self-help is a very big thing for us. So this was a problem, and the community felt self-help was needed. They tried very hard. In the end, there was a recognition that without some kind of state support, from the Home Office and from the Indian consulate, it wasn't going to be possible. So we reached out to them, and Theresa May – who was the Home Minister at the time – took that on board and worked with us. And so that's where we're at, at the moment.

Researcher: And do you know if that was new for them, to work with a religious organisation?

GS: I think in terms of this project, it was unique. It was pioneering, broke new ground. It wasn't a natural way of the Home Office working. The Home Office is a regulatory body, it works with rules, within the law, all that sort of stuff. So that's how they work. And what they're finding is that the softer approach – a more dignified, humanitarian approach – has also given them better results at a lower cost. When they're returning somebody, the cost to them is actually huge. Whereas when we're returning somebody, I think it's at a fraction of the cost. Those studies have been done, and they saw the figures were absolutely amazing.

Researcher: Are those Home Office studies?

GS: Yes, the Home Office do a calculation, in terms of what the unit cost of returns are by us, and what the unit cost of returns are by them. And they saw that... Because remember, even though the Home Office is giving some financial



support, there's a hell of a lot of voluntary work and effort that goes into it. A hell of a lot.

Researcher: And are those documents publicly available?

GS: No, we don't publish it. Because it is a sensitive area, and not everybody sees it in the same way. So we keep it very low key. We don't go up on the rooftops and shout about it. We just get on with the business of supporting people, that's it.

Researcher: And what kind of reaction do you think you would get if you published...?

GS: Within communities, if you seem to be colluding with the state on matters of immigration and so on, that's never deemed a good thing. So it's a very delicate balance. We're actually not colluding with the state, we are not forcing anybody to return. The person has to approach us, we would never approach another person. Even if we saw somebody on the street, we would not approach them. They have to approach us, that's our principle. We maintain a high degree of confidentiality. We never ask them, "How did you actually come here? Who was the agent, how were you trafficked in?" We never go into those circumstances – we don't want to know. Because if we know, and then somebody asked us, and we said we didn't know, then that would be lying. So we don't want to do that either. And equally, we don't want to be seen to be, through the back door, helping some kind of repatriation agenda either. And in fairness, I must say, since the scheme started, and Theresa May was involved – the Home Minister at the time – we have never, ever had any kind of undue pressure or requirement to divulge by the Home Office at all. They have been very professional about it, they understand. It's a relationship that has worked.

Researcher: Do you know if they have replicated this with other religious communities?

GS: Yes, I think they have been experimenting with the Hindu community, and there's also an experiment, I believe, that's going to take place with the Nepalese community. Within the Sikh community, you don't have much of that pattern now, but with some of the other newer communities... The north Indian Hindus, we would pick up their cases, we'd just deal with them. But now you would need to get people who are from Gujarat. It seems like there's an illegal population there. So with those kinds of things, they are beginning to experiment with other communities.

Researcher: And I just wanted to ask, does the Sikh Council work through the local gurdwaras to... On a practical level, how does it work?

GS: It's word of mouth. Initially, we publicised the scheme. Now it's very much word of mouth. We don't do anything, people just approach us.

Researcher: By email? How do they get in touch?

GS: By telephone. They'll telephone. Sometimes they'll pretend to be speaking on behalf of somebody. Sometimes somebody will call for somebody, because they don't have a phone. And once they've got that trust that they're speaking to the right people, then away they go.

Researcher: Yes. And do you provide any other immigration advice, or help with immigration matters?

GS: No we don't. We don't have that expertise. There are plenty of immigration lawyers, and Law Centres. They would probably do that, but we don't do that at all.

Researcher: But do you sometimes refer people to those other organisations?

GS: No we don't. We tell people that this is not something that we deal with. The thing is, there are immigration lawyers out there who are making a killing out of these poor people. Even sometimes money when they don't stand a chance, but they just put them in the system. Sometimes they are working less than minimum wage, under difficult circumstances. So we don't encourage that. It's a big responsibility. If I refer you to somebody, and the person rips you off, somebody might think maybe I've got an arrangement with the agent, or the immigration lawyer, so we avoid that.

Our reputation is really important to us. We really have to work, from day one, we defined: these are the principles within which we will work. And touch wood, so far, we've been very fortunate.

Researcher: You mentioned that within the Sikh tradition there's a big...community is very important, and self-help. We've talked about the hostile environment, and the way that some legislation affects people. What role do you see the Sikh community as playing in the context of all of these laws that make it more difficult to live as a migrant in the UK?

GS: Because we are also a campaigning organisation, if it comes to it that there is something that is happening that we don't think is in the best humanitarian or the interests of the Sikh community, we will campaign. So that's not an issue. But on this one, I think there was an acceptance that immigration is an issue in the country, and the government has to take some measures. As long as they are not draconian, as long as it's not forced repatriation, then my sense is that, mostly within the migrant communities, they will accept deportation. I'm not aware of any major campaign being launched by any community in relation to this.

However, when it comes to, say, asylum applications, then people do accept a sympathetic consideration, and not to take the line of the state from which people are fleeing. To give you an example, Afghans, Sikhs in Afghanistan and north of Pakistan. There is quite a large Sikh community there.

Researcher: Oh wow, I didn't know that.

GS: And they are having to flee those countries, and they are not getting a sympathetic consideration when it comes to political asylum. We believe that they have a just cause, and it's something that we have taken up with the government.

Researcher: But so for other types of migrants, that doesn't really apply.

GS: No it doesn't, no. Well there was an issue with spouses, some years back, and then the community did campaign. And then the rules did change, so as long as people can show that it's not a marriage of convenience, it's not migration through the back door, as long as it can be shown to be a genuine marriage, it can happen. So that's not an issue for us anymore.

Researcher: Actually on that, it's not related to this [bit about MIR]

GS: The other one we have picked up is on religious workers. It's very difficult to get religious workers to come here. And one of the reasons behind it is that many of them came and disappeared into the undergrowth. Or they came in as religious workers and then they started to do other work. So we say, "Have strict rules, we don't have a problem. Make them time-limited, give them a date when they have to return – all that is fine, but don't make it that difficult that we can't have any religious workers." Because that is a real problem, the gurdwaras are really struggling with that. So those kinds of issues, we do pick up.

Researcher: I had one more quick question. It's something we've talked about already, but it's about the hostile environment and the faith community. For example, you said that many people within the community thought that there should be an amnesty instead of a voluntary returns scheme. Could you just talk about that, and whether you think that faith played a role in that argument?

GS: Well it's a complex argument, isn't it, because if, for example, people are working in the black economy, they are working for less than the minimum wage, and they are not paying their taxes and so on. Then the sensible thing to say is that this is actually a huge resource drain on the Home Office immigration. [inaudible 27:17] have to be expanded and so on. Then sometimes it's not a bad thing... These people are working, clearly they're working, they are living here – why not just give them an amnesty, a cut-off date? Cut it off, integrate them back in, let them start paying their taxes and become the responsible people that they are. So there is that argument. But when you've got a political environment where the one main political reason for Brexit is migration, the political will – even if the politicians wanted to, and they could see the economic and other reasons to say yes to it – they still have to keep an eye on the vote, haven't they? So that's why the UK, at this moment in time, it is not a possibility. Maybe it will become a possibility in many years to come, but at this moment in time, I think it's a difficult argument. The United States has done it from time to time, and I don't know... I can see the sense in that. It would kill off a hell of a lot of bureaucracy and enforcement-type expenditure, and probably would help. But as I said, I think this is more political rather than a rational economic argument.

## 7.5 Appendix E: Text of email interview with NM

[Semi-structured interview conducted via email on 30 Aug. 2018]

NM: I was Labour Councillor from 2006 to 2014 in Redbridge Council, which at that time was under conservative control.

I was given shadow housing portfolio to look after, and I regularly attended meetings with Shelter and GLA and Civil Service housing officers. Ken Livingstone, Mayor at that time, was promoting affordable housing for people in London. I stood as GLA Labour candidate Member in 2008 for Redbridge and Havering, but did not win.

As Councillor at that time, my attention was drawn by the local Seven Kings Gurdwara to many rough sleepers sleeping in local cemeteries and by railway tracks, where we ourselves saw their clothes whilst clearing out rubbish from the streets. Some of them spoke to us in our own language and it was shocking to see how they ended up sleeping rough. The local Gurdwara's [redacted] was on the Gurdwara Management Committee at that time and every night, they would open the gym doors to allow many to sleep on the floor of gym hall. The Gurdwara would feed and clothe them and get a local doctor to check them out.

We found out that many had come to UK illegally, or through student visa and overstayed and hidden from being deported. Many on arrival, found that there were no Colleges, only fake schools and they had no money to enrol in proper colleges.

Their agents had told them that they could work to pay for their studies but the law had been tightened that if you employed an illegal migrant, you faced huge fines.

Initially the Gurdwaras, both in Ilford and Seven Kings had helped these migrants, but when they found out that many were addicted to drink and drugs and were misbehaving, the Gurdwaras found themselves fending off fights. The local Ilford Recorder regularly carried stories of fights and murders between the rough sleepers, many around the Ilford Gurdwara, in cemetery next door, behind the churches and by the railway tracks. These stories disgusted the wider Sikh community that these people were bringing the whole community in disrepute, they felt that they should be deported back to India. Their agents had promised them jobs, education, permanent stay, marriages to settle in U.K., but the reality was harsh and different. Most of them had been advised to throw away their documents and ID documents and were stateless.



Some had found cash in hand jobs with builders from their own community, who paid them intermittently and exploited them. Many did not know how to apply for asylum as they did not speak English, and they did not want to approach authorities to register themselves, as they feared they would be handed to deportation authorities. So they remained hidden, hoping that the Government might make it easier for them to get the 'red passport' after being in U.K. over a number of years but the Government kept making it more harder to get asylum and right to remain in UK. They were in catch 22, no papers, no jobs, no homes, no way to be identified to go back to their homelands as India was not accepting them back without their IDs and proof that they had at one time lived in India.

Around that time, I was member of Sikh Council UK, and we had a debate on this dire situation of many Sikh men. Some men said that the women could turn to prostitution to earn a living, but the men could not even do that. Many men had illnesses, broken bones and disabilities, one was dying of cancer and he wanted to go home to die with his family.

Gurmel Singh Kandola, Chair of Sikh Council UK raised the plight of these 500 or more men with the Government Minister, as the local MPs pretended that the problem did not exist in their constituencies. The Sikh Council was offered funding to find those who voluntarily wanted to return, refer them to Home Office who would liaise with Indian Embassy to get their return visa. This scheme appealed to some men as they were given money to buy clothes and some cash to go home looking decent. The Sikh Council then did programmes on Sikh TV that students should come to UK the legal way to study and not end up like those who had found themselves trapped in no man's land, with no country being responsible for them. Many men spoke on camera to show the benches where they slept and the true story of their illegal journeys.

The Voluntary Returners Scheme was advertised in all Gurdwaras and on Sikh TV and radio channels. It was welcomed by those who made full use of it.

Some people criticised Sikh Council that they should not be helping send these people back, but that these migrants should be helped to settle in UK.

But Sikh Council answered that it was completely voluntary and no one was being compulsorily imprisoned and sent back. That some migrants themselves did not like the cold weather and the lack of opportunities they had encountered, they had decided of their own accord that the grass is not greener on other side. Sikh Council leaders had personally gone to Panjab and held press conferences to tell the people there, not to impart with their money to travel agents who just dump them in U.K. and do not check on them later. One or two Sikh organisations had criticised Sikh Council that they were on 'free jolly' paid by government for themselves to go to India to publicise the Voluntary Returners Scheme, but Sikh Council were praised by those they had helped to unite them with their families. So as far as I was concerned, the Scheme was a success, in that it had helped many to return home with some dignity and they had not died of hypothermia sleeping by a railway track or in a cemetery, or got murdered.

In Ilford, there are still today many rough sleepers and the area is overrun by illegal migrants, not recorded in electoral registers.

However, to some, success was going back home to their families and to others, they had managed to stay in UK through legal means.

So that is to me a success story that less people are now emigrating illegally from Punjab. That many now know that the agents have been taking their money, promising them the Earth, but the true reality is homelessness, unemployment, sleeping rough. So we see few Sikh groups of men fighting like animals, most now report to the Homeless unit in Green Lane, Ilford where they are offered clean clothes, bath and help.

Many addicted migrants do not want to be helped, and that is their choice to choose that life style. Nothing anyone can do to help those who refuse help.

[Redacted], you should approach the Redbridge Council and Ilford Recorder to take you around these rough sleepers' hot spots where you could directly talk to the migrants, for your research.

Since leaving Labour Party and politics after 2014, after hostile environment was created around me by some people whom I had accused of fake voting, the Labour Party had not supported me. Now I have completely turned my back on the local council and politics. I still do social work with Sikh women who need support in a male dominated patriarchal Asian society. I am no longer a member of Sikh Council UK as their intolerance of mixed marriages and lack of raising voice against female infanticide and gender discrimination, made me step out of their group, as their focus was not on UK issues, but more on Indian matters.

I am now properly retired but still busy sitting as Magistrate, on Employment Tribunals and on Police Misconduct Panels. I was founder of Sikh Women's Alliance Group and chaired it past 18 years, empowering women through holding events and conferences. We are taking 57 seater coach this Sunday 26/8/18 to Thetford to join our last Maharaja Duleep Singh's 125 year commemorations and lay wreaths of the three graves in St Andrews Church, where our lady Maharaja of lost Kingdom, Panjab lies buried. I have been asked to say something about his daughter Princess

Sophia who was in 9 team of Sylvia Pankhurst's struggle to get vote for women 100 years ago.

I hope I do her justice as the tragic family or any of their issue, are no more in this world.

Problem of homelessness has got worse in Redbridge Council area. Check out latest Ilford Recorder stories on people sleeping under bridges and roadways. You only have to drive through Ilford town centre in evenings to see people's clothes and card boxes piled by the pavements. Many are mentally ill and alcoholics, thus even the community shun them.

No other Voluntary Return Scheme currently exists as Home Office funding ran out few years ago. Homeless people do not have the money to employ immigration lawyers to take up their cases to determine their right to stay in UK. So the vicious circle continues.

When Home Office ran the Voluntary Returners Scheme, they helped many homeless people to get duplicate documents to prove how long they had lived in UK. Many were successful in getting their Right to Stay here through Home Office investigations and help.

Those who could not prove their status, some were deported or sent back voluntarily. Many of these homeless immigrants work cash in hand with Asian builders and they live in the houses they are refurbishing.

Some have rented back garages and sheds discreetly to survive.

The local Gurdwaras feed them and help wherever they can, but that means more then turn up from other areas to Ilford.

## 7.6 Appendix F: Transcript of in-person interview with MP

[Interview conducted in person at MP's organisation's office on 4 Jul. 2019]

MP: You know about our service, so I don't need to go into all that. But in terms of the Hostile Environment and what's going on, I'm going back now to the vans, and when they brought those out. And basically, at that time as well, they were kind of looking at, in order to claim benefits you need to pass an English test, and all sorts of things. They started going to particularly black areas and trying to pick up illegal migrants at stations. And this kind of thing came up again and again, and I raised it with the support group that we run here. And the women were also very angry and upset, because the women are also migrants to the country, and they may not have a stable immigration status in the country. Not through their own fault, but because of the fact that they were brought in either as spouses or for domestic servitude, trafficking, or came in in a particular way but then overstayed, and were subjected to violence and abuse. They felt that this was targeting them, the majority of them. And those it didn't affect, they were saying, "this is all wrong." So we decided that if they came to Southall train station, we would do an impromptu demo.

Researcher: So it was decided beforehand?

MP: Yes. So we watched out every day, for any vans there, or people checking. So there wasn't anything. And one day, on a Thursday, they turned up outside our office.

Researcher: With the van, the Go Home van, or the immigration enforcement van?

MP: No, the ordinary vans that they have, enforcement agents. So luckily it was a Thursday, because the support group women come on a Thursday. I run and manage a support group. Someone came in and she said, "[Redacted], there's an immigration van outside." And they got quite worried that it was here, that they were raiding us. So a couple of them came in and I thought, "Oops, we should do something about this." And we quickly grabbed our megaphones. We didn't realise what we were going to be shouting at them. We had on a piece of paper Southall Black Sisters, and quickly somebody did it with a marker pen so we could hold it. Their jaw did drop when we came out in a large group, 15 women at the time. We all came out and surrounded the van, shouting at them, saying "Go away" and all sorts of things. They drove off, and here, if you go up that way and turn right you go back on yourself. So we decided that a group of us would go that way behind them, and another group would go that way and face them as they're coming through. And these women are local women, victims of domestic violence. They disappeared off for a few minutes, and we got wind that they were at Himalaya Palace, the shopping centre. So we all got there. And by now we were all out, the staff were out, there were 30 of us. And we then kind of... There are 2 entrances and exits, one at the front and one at the back. So we decided to really split the group, it was a large group. And you can imagine, a group of women, all mixed race – in terms of race, we're all mixed – coming out and shouting at them, saying, "Return back to where you came from." And the community came out. And what I did was, I also used the opportunity to not just do it in English, but in a language that they understand, so they'd understand why we were doing it, what's the reason behind it. And I managed to speak to a few people, neighbours, asking them to join us. And a lot of them said, "It's not our problem. They should go back to their countries – why are they here?" And I said, "If you think about it, they're asking mainly black people to carry ID cards. And this is ID cards through the back door, particularly for black and

minority people. It's not right – why should we have to carry those things, when the white community won't have to, because they're not stopped in the same way." And lot of them were saying, "No, I'm happy to carry my passport around." And they were also newly-arrived migrants – they haven't been here for years. So I was having these debates and discussions, and funnily enough it was the men who were supporting the action far more than the women were, in the community. That kind of finished, and I didn't realise how big it had become. And obviously the government then withdrew the vans, and things. And so we then cottoned on that some of the voluntary sector groups were ringing me and saying, "Did you get a letter from the Home Office as part of this operation?" So I said, "They wouldn't send it to me, because he knows exactly what I think. They wouldn't send it to me because of the action we took." They said, "Well we've been sent it, we don't know what to do." There were some groups saying they weren't going to participate. But what the government opted to do is align more with religious organisations, to use that forum then to detain and deport people. The way that they're doing it is that there are informants there, inside actually. I got to find out that the informants that they use within the community, every person that they deport through the informant, they get £1000.

Researcher: I'd heard of organisations getting money for the VRS.

MP: This is why the religious groups have co-opted on, because they're going to get money. And one of the scary things is that they're embedded within that. And where people befriend other people, they then say, "Go there, you'll get good advice," without notifying them that they might take your address, and you might be detained and deported, or raided. And they have also come out in saying that they don't want to have these people living here, they don't have the right to be here. For example one young man said to me that our women are becoming too westernised. And he was newly-arrived here on a student visa, Asian guy. So I turned round and said to him, "If you feel like that then why are you here? Why don't you go back to your own country?" So we're trying to challenge it – but they've co-opted into the whole thing. Some of the voluntary organisations have also co-opted into it. So there's St Mungo's and Homeless Link. And what I understand is that St Mungo's, who work with people on the streets, they are informing the Home Office, particularly of Eastern Europeans. And that's all about getting funding and money, so they're buying into the government's stance on deportation of illegal migrants. But it's also the government's way of making us all border agents, in terms of the act which says that landlords are also border agents now, banks are, hospitals are. Everyone has become a border agent, so the state is using divide-and-rule tactics within communities as well. And so that's what led us to be part of investigating the state and what's going on. It is really frightening for women in lots of contexts, because not only is the border agent those agents, but also you've got social workers where they have embedded immigration officers now, or they have a hotline to the Home Office. So where you have a woman who has fled domestic violence and she's got nowhere to go, and she approaches social services – particularly if she's got children – then the problem is that she's fearful of the fact that they will ring the Home Office. Because the social workers say they don't have a duty to support somebody who doesn't have the right to live. They have a duty towards the children, and they're always threatening to deport the children – sorry, send her off but put the children in care, or send them to the perpetrator and his family. So there's a big fear of reporting now. The same with the police. Where women have called the police out, often what's happening is the police are asking the women about their immigration status first, and then using that as leverage to say, "She's an illegal migrant – detain her." So then they ring the Home Office, and have that person detained. So there is a group of communities and women who have absolutely nowhere to approach, particularly in our context about domestic violence and sexual violence. So they have absolutely nowhere to turn to. And I understand that some women's groups are also buying into this, in terms of informing the government if they come across women who don't have a regular status in the country. So people are being bought with that funding. And it's really horrific in the context of how women and children will be affected, the most vulnerable in society, the group of women who have absolutely nowhere to turn to. Where are human rights? Because everyone has a right, and you can't say, "These people have more rights, as opposed to these ones, the undesirables." So the language that's going on is of desirables and undesirables. The desirables are the ones that we rescue, like the Syrians, the ones we bring in. So they're the ones we should put all our energy and effort into, providing homes and that. And those that came on the back of a lorry and so on, they have no rights, and should be turned back. So they're the undesirables.

And you have landlords who exploit. You have landlords who exploit sexually and financially. They're asking us to be immigration experts. So if you want to rent a house and you show them that you made an application, immigration law is so complex and complicated that even the best layperson wouldn't understand it. So how are they expecting landlords to understand it? So landlords are now saying, "We want to see your passport." They called it the red passport. "Have you got a red passport? No? You can't get a room." Or women were showing their documentation, they were taking the originals and never giving it back. And then they were sexually exploiting them. So you know, exploitation then becomes wider and bigger. And you're allowing settled communities to exploit vulnerable people, and giving them a free hand to do that without any consequences.

So none of these people have a voice or anywhere to go anymore. They're trapped, completely trapped. It was interesting, with the support group today, we do a residential, and one of the women I took to the residential a couple of years ago, she actually said to the rest of the group, "I felt like a queen." We took them to a nice place, and I know a lot of these women will never be able to afford to go. We took them to a nice place, took them to Cornwall, and she felt, "Wow, I've got a room to myself, how beautiful this room is." She went swimming in the sea. She said, "I cried so

much when I returned, because from where I was sleeping there, I was sleeping on the floor." So it's interesting. Her application is still pending at the Home Office, and it's been 3 years. She probably will get the right to remain, but she's waiting and waiting. She can't work, she can't do anything.

So in that context, women don't want to be claiming off the state and what people have been saying: that these people come to claim off the state, and get housing. But actually it's not very true. And the way in which the government said that these illegal people used up our funding at hospitals, which isn't true either, because a lot of people are too scared to approach them. So they end up dealing with a lot of things either with the medication that they've learnt from their own countries and have managed to get, or they just do home remedies. So it's not really about them going round and using NHS services. But it's about targeting certain communities for the problems the country has. And who do you target? You target the illegal lot, or those who aren't fully documented.

So with the religious organisations, they've just bought into that whole thing. And some of the voluntary organisations too, unfortunately.

Researcher: So you're not aware of any resistance within those communities?

MP: No.

Researcher: Because I've heard about one mosque that was resisting, but I've not been able to find it.

MP: That one over there is [pointing in the direction of a local mosque]. In fact a few years ago they put up a big banner saying "We provide immigration advice, domestic violence advice, housing." It's come down now. But it's quite suspicious of what's going on in there. I wasn't allowed to give out leaflets to women, around domestic violence. And when I did manage, around the guise of a mental health day, I was invited to have a stall there, and the men were really watching me: what I was handing out, what I was saying to the women. It really is an unsafe place, and they do prey on the vulnerable. Even the congregation prey on the vulnerable, and exploit them. And religious institutions. We've got a woman, currently, who has been assisted by a Hindu temple, but they're exploiting her by making her work long hours. In return what they're giving her is a bit of food and a shelter over her head. And the whole thing around no recourse to public funds. So they're actually exploiting her in there. We've tried very hard to get her. She's quite religious, so she's finding it hard. And they're the only people she knows. So she finds it very hard to let go, try and have a more independent life. We have some funds for people with no recourse to public funds, particularly those who are victims of DV, so we can house them for a certain number of weeks, but not long-term. So in that sense she's getting quite worried about what would happen to her if her immigration status isn't sorted out in the period of the funding. She's fearful of the unknown on the opposite side, so she's carrying on working there.

Researcher: Do you know if the Home Office targets any faith community in particular?

MP: It's all, even the churches. Gurdwaras, mosques, temples, they're all into it. They're keeping very quiet about it.

Researcher: Understandably so.

MP: We did a demonstration. I don't know if [redacted] mentioned. The Home Office had a meeting with a lot of the religious groups, and St Mungo's and people like that turned up, around immigration.

Researcher: When was that?

MP: That was last year.

Researcher: Was it around here?

MP: It was just over the hill here, at the Hilton hotel. It comes under Hayes, but it's not too far from Southall. All of these people came. We weren't allowed in at all. They realised who we were, so they wouldn't let us in – so we stood outside demonstrating. But I know one man who couldn't find the entrance so I helped him. I got talking to him and found out he was from St Mungo's.

Researcher: From reading the ICIBI report on Skybreaker, it seemed the feedback was that it wasn't successful in terms of numbers of deportations or removals that were facilitated through the scheme. But I suppose that, with time, and with investment in that scheme on the part of the Home Office, you build trust in those communities, and it becomes a bigger thing. From what you're saying, it sounds much bigger than I'd known before.

MP: When we were outside Himalaya, I found the informants. They were standing there while some people were being taken out into the vans, and we were giving numbers and things to people who were being detained. Because what they do is, they lock themselves up in there. He did. And in the video, you see him coming out and saying, "[Redacted], you know me." I said, "You're part of the Home Office UK Border Agency – I'm nothing to do with you." But we did that, and then when they were leaving with everyone they'd picked up, I don't think they were thinking of raiding that. I think they were waiting to raid a house, not that place, but they barricaded themselves in there. And then what happened as they got everyone into the van, as they were leaving, I found two men talking to them about the people that were picked up. And I turned around and said, "Are you the informants?" And they looked at me, and I chased him through that shopping centre saying, "Informant, informant." And he ran away. Now if he wasn't an informant, he wouldn't have run. He would have said, "It's nothing to do with me, I'm just curious." But both of them ran from me. But I had my megaphone in my hand.

Researcher: How did you find out that it was individuals, also, that were getting money from the Home Office?

MP: I know it through other means way back. It's been going on for years. I know if from 1990s. We were helping a woman who was being picked up and deported, detained with her children. We were dealing with a domestic violence element of it, and she'd been put up in a bed and breakfast in Heston. And she rang me up and said, "You know the family I befriended are Home Office informers?" So they befriend people, and then they inform the Home



Office, and the Home Office pick up and detain them. And you would never tell that they were informers. This was a white couple who had taken all of her jewellery, everything off her, all her belongings. And then I ran to the B and B, picked up the children. She came running. The children didn't have anything on their feet, she didn't either. Picked them up and took them to the office. That couple was trying to stop us from leaving. They were saying, "You can't go, the Home Office are coming." And I said, "I can go wherever I want." So I bundled them in the car very fast and brought them to the office. Then we had to do a quick campaign to stop her being picked up, about how they were picking up this woman with two children, three children actually, one she was breastfeeding. So we made an application very fast, and they couldn't remove her. Then she said, "I want to go and get my belongings." So we arranged through the solicitor to go to this couple's house, to go and pick it up. And they told the Home Office that we were coming on such and such a day. And although it was all done through solicitors and legally. So we went there, and three police vans circled us, and stopped us. So we couldn't get her belongings. They took both of us. Luckily her children were in the office, so they couldn't take her children. But they picked both of us up, and they took us to Harmondsworth.

Researcher: You were taken to Harmondsworth?

MP: Yes! I thought it was quite funny. They took me there as well. Luckily, they couldn't detain me. There was a phone there, so I phoned the office and said, "We've been detained." But I'm British. So the office then had to do another campaign to get her released, more so than me, because I was released anyway. And I was sitting outside waiting and waiting, and we managed to get her released there and then. So that's how I know this whole system of informants are around, and you have to be very careful who you talk to. And you really wouldn't even be able to tell that they are. And they're within the community, and they talk to you as if they're really going to help you out. "I'm your brother, I can see you're not coping very well – what happened to you?" They use these tactics, particularly in the gurdwara, they use those tactics to befriend people and get the information. That's how I know that this racket is going on within the Home Office.

Researcher: On the walking tour they showed us the gurdwaras belonging to different castes, and on that one corner the difference is so stark, so visual. I wondered if there's a difference in the way the Home Office works with those different communities. One looks like it's so much better-funded, probably done with a lot more collaboration with the council, whereas the other one is just a house. But I don't know if that's something that plays into it, or if it's just a blanket approach.

MP: I think it's a blanket approach. They will go into the larger institutions, maybe not so much into the houses. Those castes of those houses might be very small communities. I'm not sure if they've co-opted in, but the larger ones definitely have. The gurdwaras definitely have, and so have the mosques and the temples – they've all co-opted in. They're part of the establishment now.

Researcher: It's so interesting, because we're so used to talking about the hostile environment. But in a way, those gurdwaras are operating in a financially hostile environment. The way that austerity and the hostile environment go together. Because of course when all of the funding is restricted, it's easier to co-opt people.

MP: Yes. But these institutions are rich. The congregation gives a lot of money to them, so they're not really poor. It's just that they began – particularly the gurdwaras, I've heard, but also the mosques... All of them, actually, began to say, "What are these students doing in our country? They keep coming to the gurdwara and eating food, and we can't cater for them, there's 100,000s of them." So they started that whole discussion as to why these students were being allowed into the country, saying that we should be sending them back. Because if they can't afford to buy food, then we should be sending them back to their countries. That's where the discussion started, really, within religious institutions. And that's not the fault of the student – they were paying fees to get into the college, but then weren't allowed to work. And so when you're not allowed to work, how do you support yourself? They're not the richest of people out there, and they can't keep paying your tuition fees in that way. And that has led, with the government's changes around immigration and all that, has led to a lot of young women who came as students, into prostitution, because they couldn't make ends meet. A lot of them went into prostitution. And it was odd because some of the men that I sometimes hang around with, because you learn a lot from them – what's on the street and that – they were able to pinpoint a female student, and they used to call them "scooteri." Scooteri for us means moped, or like a scooter. So I said, "What scooter? There's no scooter round here." They said, "No, the woman, she's a scooter because she moves around from one man to another." So they were telling me how hard it was for those women to survive. So for them, even if they got £5 for sex, they were happy to do it, because it was so difficult for them to find jobs or have enough money to look after themselves.

Researcher: And it's so interesting that level of exploitation and 'vulnerability,' let's call it. In refugee law, there's asylum which is based on persecution, and then other forms of migration. But to me it seems like the hostile environment vulnerabilises people to such an extent that it looks like persecution.

MP: Yes, it is.

Researcher: That's the kind of thing that if you were to... It's almost the basis of an asylum claim.

MP: But it's sad, because you have the men student abusing the female students. They felt really bad, but they said, "That's the only way they're going to make money." So they were confused in their own minds as to what they were doing. It wasn't right to their own women. But then they say, "If we don't give them sex, where do they go?" So the conversation was really weird, because on the one hand that's abuse, but they were saying, "They've got no money – what do we do? At least this way they're earning some money." It was really weird, because both were on a difficult

migration thing of students coming in. And one is having to sell the body, and the other is saying, "OK I'll do it, but I feel bad doing it to you." The whole discourse of all of that is frightening. But at the moment what I see is that a lot of these young men have gone into drugs, alcohol, committing suicide – because they've got no avenue to turn to in terms of employment.

When did we ever talk about illegal migrants? Until the conversation around students and illegal migrants came up. And I think that's where the starting point was, where the religious groups were saying, "We don't want to feed them anymore." And that's the way... The whole thing around, "Who are these students who can't speak English, who come into our country to educate themselves? And how are they getting into universities and colleges if they can't speak English?" So that's where the whole thing about inflaming people, particularly those who have the right to be here, around who should be here and who shouldn't. I think that's where this all comes from, as well. Giving power to the state to create more laws, to then say, "They can't come into the UK." But the irony is they also go to those third world countries – well maybe not so much third world countries, because I think England is heading that way – trying to get people to come to the UK. This whole thing around Indians coming here as students, and blah blah blah, and then she goes off to India and wants to give visas out to people. But the rich ones – it's not the poorer communities who manage to get here. So that's the thing about the way in which the state works – it's all about divide and rule, and it's dividing communities. And if you look at it, the faith-based groups have those strong views.

Researcher: Do you know any people who have been deterred from visiting those faith centres because of fear?

MP: Yes. And you have to alert them, if they're going there, "be very careful who you talk to." And it's a question of, "Who do I turn to? Who do I talk to?" Because you're suspicious of everyone. And what does that then do? You develop depression, mental health – because it manifests in your head that everyone is spying on you.

Researcher: It's really... hostile is the only way to describe it.

MP: It's so hostile, it's unbelievable. I got asked to fill in a form about my rights to be in the UK. So people are being asked if they have the right to remain.

Researcher: In the street?

MP: No, in the hospital. You have to fill in a form and say when you came into the country. I just put a cross against that – I said, "You guess." But you can imagine, if you're going there, and there's all these posters up saying, "You will only get treatment if you have the right to remain in the UK." They're everywhere, and that deters people from seeking help. And then what happens is you get diseases and all sorts, that are not treated properly. And they're human rights – why should we treat them any different? Actually if you think about it, these people say, "If you give us the right to work, we will work. We don't want to claim off the state." And they're putting them in that situation where they can't even rent rooms anymore. Nobody's willing to rent them a room, so where are you putting them? On the streets.

Researcher: I haven't looked at the last few years of 'voluntary' returns or administrative removals, but I don't think all of these policies have increased those numbers.

MP: No. And I had one case of a woman who voluntarily left. She did a PhD, and obviously she could go back, because of the fact that she's from a wealthy background. So a lot of those people will go back.

Researcher: But she'd overstayed after finishing her PhD?

MP: Yes, and she'd got into a relationship that was very violent – that's how I got to know of her. But she could make that decision to voluntarily return, so if they are inflated, it's not because of the fact that they've persuaded people. It's the fact that they could go back. Or they were trapped into it. So they say, "We offer you money – something now and something once you get there." Those people, once they get there, they never see that money. The bureaucracy of the whole thing is such that you end up giving up. Places like Africa or India, or anywhere, with the bureaucracy of the whole thing, you will never get that money. So a lot of them will end up never getting the money anyway.

Researcher: And I think I've heard that for a lot of people, getting documents from the Indian authorities is basically impossible, so if you've been encouraged to rip up your documents on the way, even if you do want to VR, it's impossible.

MP: No. And that's because I know that the Indian embassy won't give out travel documents to people. And to get a copy of your passport takes forever – so you could be here for 5 or 6 years before you get it. Because even those who have the right to remain here need their passport. And it can take a very long time for them to get their passports from those embassies.

Researcher: I'm interested in the resistance, if there is any, among faith communities. But I know you're saying that there isn't any.

MP: No. And even when I spoke at another event locally, they're not interested in those issues. Partly because I suspect that they all feel those people shouldn't be here, so you don't get that same support. So even when we did the whole thing outside the Hilton, no local groups came. It was really SBS and some local groups that were resisting against the state around immigration. Nobody else came.

Researcher: So the meeting last year, it was the Home Office...

MP: And local religious groups, and voluntary groups were invited to it.

Researcher: And you weren't meant to find out about it?

MP: We found out about it.

Researcher: So do you think it was an operational meeting?

MP: I have a feeling it was.



Researcher: Or a thank you? The fact that it was at the Hilton...

MP: I think it was an operational meeting, about where we go from here, or how we identify... It must be that, I can't think of what else they would want to meet up with, rather than to say thank you. I guess it's two-fold. "We love to work with you, it's really important to work together. Let's look at the way we work, and what the funding is." I'm sure that's another spoon they give out.

Researcher: I just got an FOI back yesterday, surprisingly, from the Home Office, about the number of enforcement visits to faith centres, and it was in the hundreds per year.

MP: Really?

Researcher: I can share it with you if you want. I was very surprised they gave out the information, because I just expected a refusal. They do community visits, like the fishing visits, and then arrest visits, which are much fewer. I think there were 6 last year. But the community relations visits, there are hundreds.

MP: They use that with the transport police, because the Home Office border agents can't go into train stations. So they get transport police to profile black people. If you were dressed in a particular way, or you didn't look as if you were... They were profiling, and they would then pull them up and ask to see their travel cards. That's where they would pick them up, and say to the Home Office outside, "When they walk out, pick that person up." So they use those kinds of tactics. When they go into gurdwaras, it's a bit like saying we're having a community event. Raising awareness and so on. But also you've got the police who are part of that whole process, it really is scary. I don't know if you know that we're one of the BME groups that have become involved with the super-complaint against the police. We've taken out a complaint against the police and the way they police those with immigration issues, when their role is to protect and safeguard. Their role isn't to be immigration officers. So they go to call-outs where the first thing they ask a woman is, "What's your status?" as opposed to, "What's the problem? What's happened?" So they're asking them what their status is as the first question, and then they're using the perpetrator to say, "She hasn't got the right to live here, I've revoked her visa." Using that to then detain women and then deport them, rather than safeguarding them, or writing a statement about the violence and abuse she's been subjected to. It's more about, "How do we get rid of her? Let's just get her detained, and then she's out of the way"

Researcher: Because those people would be eligible for the DV concession.

MP: Exactly. But they get confused between that and trafficking and all sorts of things. As I said, immigration law is so complex. If somebody's come on a spousal visa, "I was made to do all the housework, all the cleaning, I wasn't given food," they think that's about trafficking or domestic servitude. So they go to the wrong mechanism to apply. And sometimes where you do have some police officers who are trying to help, she's got nowhere to live because she's got no recourse, then they use that mechanism because they get housed straight away. So those statistics that show someone's domestic servitude or trafficking, I can't believe them, because I've known of women on a spousal visa who have gone through that. And they shouldn't have really, because they're DDV and DV cases, they're not part of the trafficking. It's part and parcel of the domestic violence. And if you can prove that, you'll obviously get right to remain. But then we've got other categories: overstayers, dependant visas, human rights, right to family life. You've got loads of different people who just don't get any protection in this country whatsoever.

Researcher: Have you worked with people who've gone on to get some kind of refugee status?

MP: Yes.

Researcher: So it's a whole mixture.

MP: Yes, we get a lot of them actually. 7-year-rule visas, we've got some women who recently got that, because the children have been here 7 years, and they've shown that the child has established family life through school and friends. But the problem is also that what the state has done is cut legal aid funding for a lot of people with immigration issues. And we managed to preserve the spousal visa legal aid, so that they can apply and get legal aid, if they came on a spousal visa.

Researcher: For the DV concession?

MP: Yes. They're able to get legal aid, and asylum are. All the rest are not. And you have to pay these hefty NHS surcharges. We calculated a woman with 3 children, it would be £6000. So how are they supposed to be able to make an application, and go to the right reputable solicitors to do that work? They end up selling their gold and all these things, and going to unscrupulous firms. Ending up there, they take all their money and no application is made, or the wrong application is made. It's such a block for them, every which way they turn. Because they've got rights. They've got rights to be here, they've got the right to make an application, they'll probably get their leave to remain. And then you've got the whole erosion of the legal aid system, and you've got the whole erosion of specialist services. And you've got very few good solicitors that do legally-aided work on immigration. And only if you've got merits to your case that they'll take them on, otherwise they won't. So they're kind of stuck in this bubble, and we have to wait for that bubble to burst. And is it with death that that bubble will burst? Once you start seeing a lot of people dying as a result, because they've got nowhere else to go.

Researcher: I don't know. It's interesting to hear you talk about stuff like the public outcry against the Go Home vans, and the amazing activism against the more visible enforcement, and to think about whether that's linked to them decided to do the more underhanded approach to enforcement, with community groups, the soft power approach. Because I think that the anti-raids work has been really successful in having them running scared, so it would make sense that they would go round the back.

MP: Racism is also on the increase, because of the hostile environment we're in. We see a lot of clients getting abused now. I got called a Paki – never been called a Paki and I got called a Paki. Derogatory words that are coming back into the vocabulary, and it's become acceptable.

Researcher: Was it a younger person?

MP: Yes. It was actually a child. It was a child. So you know, that whole thing around racism is now on the streets, and it's acceptable. Nobody is challenging schools and children. And racism isn't just about white and black – it's about communities as well. This is discrimination by settled communities to newer migrants. There is discrimination going on. And you'll see the Somalis argue about which part of Somalia they come from, and there's discrimination going on there as well. So you see all those fractions everywhere. And now this whole thing about religious fundamentalism that's on the increase. That's dividing communities as well. We're no longer together. One meeting I went to, they said, "We don't know what happens to our women. They go into Southall Black Sisters and they come out these different women." And they don't come out as different women = they come out armed with rights. And they didn't have that before. So they're building that confidence through that process. Although we're saying also that the women go into refuges and they become mad – this is the Sikhs that were saying that. He was saying, "What we need to do is ensure we have refuges near the gurdwaras, so that we can manage our women and control them, so they don't go mad." That's not the real reason, but he was trying to use that, to say, "Let's stop our women getting out of control." It's interesting what's going on there. You saw what happened in Birmingham, and the way that's being used, the divisions as to what children are allowed. Then what happens is, the Hindus will say the same, the Sikhs will say the same: "We don't want our children taught that." But you don't even know what's being taught. It's all age appropriate. Nobody's teaching young children about how to have sex. It's age appropriate, it's about how to have a healthy relationship – and relationships can be in different forms. And you have to accept that, because that's the world we're living in.

Researcher: And it all fuels racism by white people pretending not to be homophobic, which is the saddest thing.

MP: It's interesting, what's going on in this country. And with Brexit taking over... I see more and more Eastern European saying they wished they'd never come here. They had never faced that same racism that we faced as black people. But as soon as it started, they started to face it. We had women who were crying, I went to a meeting where I was presenting some work. She came up to me and said, "What will happen to me?" I said, "I really don't know at the moment. It depends what happens to Brexit." And then the Home Office, stupid people. You have to apply for leave to remain here online on your mobile phone, and you can't get the forms, you can't download anything. It's a mess, a complete and utter mess. And they've employed private companies to run things. And we're having the same problem with the Home Office, because they've employed private people who just don't understand the system. And the solicitors are saying, "We're banging our heads against a brick wall, because they're just not understanding the process." They're privatising everything, but they don't have the experience or the know-how to do that work.

Researcher: It seems like the Home Office has run away with itself. Such tunnel vision on this one goal.

MP: How many people you're getting out. They don't realise how many people are coming in, how many people are going out. Actually it's far more than the people who are coming in. For all these problems, let's target minority people. "Those who are illegal in this country, they're the ones to blame for all our downgrading of NHS services and all of that stuff, it's all because of these migrants that we've not got enough money." And actually, they're the ones who have contributed to the economy. And so now they're talking about bringing in, for the farm work, for the land, bringing in certain people at a certain time to do those crops. It's a bit like Italy, Italy does that. The gates for coming into Italy open up when the crops need harvesting.

Researcher: And let's not talk about all the slavery that goes on in Italy.

MP: And the pay, people are working £2 an hour still.

Researcher: And in the detention centres they work for one.

MP: It's outrageous, that's exploitation, isn't it? If they're giving people in detention £1 an hour... They're not criminals – and even criminals should be given the right rate. You're talking about equality and rights. You can't dehumanise people and say, "You're only worth £1 an hour." That's really completely wrong, don't you think?

Researcher: And it's run by a private company.

MP: It's wrong. Shouldn't we be saying something about this? This is wrong, it's criminal. If it was anyone else, wouldn't we be going to a tribunal? Wouldn't we be fighting this? How comes we're not fighting for them, and they can't even say anything and have to stay quiet?

Researcher: It's been really interesting this past week seeing the anti-detention stuff in the US. Massive mobilisation by people surrounding detention centres, stopping staff getting in and out – and I know that there's a lot of direct action in the UK, but we've never got to that level. And I hope we will, because the process of legislative change on detention is so slow.

MP: We'll have to see. I think we've come the full circle, and we're going back again. On everything. We're fighting for rights.

Researcher: I thought you meant back to a more humane approach.

MP: Well you never know, were there minority rights for people in this country? I think we're coming full circle. Because we fought those fights in the 70s, we fought those fights, and now if you look at the generation, they don't need to have those fights. But the new generation that's emerging will have to fight for rights again. So we're coming back to

the full circle really.

## 7.7 Appendix G: Testimony of anonymous refugee

"Before I became an asylum seeker I had a good salary, paying bills, going out with friends, overall a normal life of any Londoner in their twenties. Although I had been living in London, I found myself in a threatening situation. I was branded a traitor, and my photos were everywhere. I was advised not to go back. I had a temporary visa which would expire, and so I claimed asylum with a thick pile of credible evidence. I was assured my case was straightforward, but how little we knew – even my lawyers. I lived in limbo for six years. I lost my job, my status in society, my life and, most important, my health – both physical and mental – to the hostile environment. Working was out of the question – even for voluntary positions I needed to have legal status. I faced a brick wall because of my situation. I was denied the right to take part in the most basic activities, as asylum seekers are deemed to be illegal in this country due to the hostile environment. I got isolated, like I didn't exist. I had to report to the Home Office every two weeks, which I dreaded. I wasn't a criminal, but I was treated like one. These policies pushed me to the edge.

"I remember the day I saw a photo of those godforsaken vans, and they were talking to me too. I was so distressed. I couldn't go out of my flat for more than a week. Countless times I considered ending my life. And that was the purpose of the hostile environment – to make you feel miserable, so you would give up. And I didn't want to give them the satisfaction. I started volunteering in different charities. I started as a cook at my local church in a homeless shelter, where I met many undocumented migrants, where the simple food we served would be the only warm meal they would get. I was introduced to a migrant rights charity, and heard numerous stories of how the hostile environment had affected people horribly. From war-torn countries, victims of trafficking and domestic violence, political prisoners, and many more. I realised that, actually, I was one of the lucky ones. I had 14 hearings, only 5 of which was completed because the Home Office said that there were no sufficient grounds. Eventually, I got my status two years ago, and the first thing I did was apply to study human rights law. I still suffer with severe anxiety due to the hostile environment, but the fight is not over."

**Source:** (2019). *Refugee crisis at home: Human rights violations in the UK*. Lecture notes. School of Oriental and African Studies, delivered 5 Jun. 2019.

## 7.8 Appendix H: Immigration raids based on allegations from members of the public

Re: Freedom of Information request - 54608

Table: Enforcement visits conducted between 1 January 2014 and 31 December 2018 linked to 'Information Received' (Allegations)

Calendar quarter	Enforcement visits
Q1 2014	1,719
Q2 2014	1,547
Q3 2014	1,193
Q4 2014	1,166
Q1 2015	1,094
Q2 2015	1,489
Q3 2015	1,518
Q4 2015	1,156

Q1 2016	1,215
Q2 2016	1,361
Q3 2016	1,389
Q4 2016	1,314
Q1 2017	1,177
Q2 2017	1,275
Q3 2017	1,297
Q4 2017	1,095
Q1 2018	1,115
Q2 2018	1,364
Q3 2018	1,240
Q4 2018	1,026
<b>Grand Total</b>	<b>25,750</b>

Source: Home Office [in response to Freedom of Information request 54608], available at: [https://www.whatdotheyknow.com/request/590908/response/1408904/attach/3/FOI54608%20Atkinson%20Response.pdf?cookie\\_passthrough=1](https://www.whatdotheyknow.com/request/590908/response/1408904/attach/3/FOI54608%20Atkinson%20Response.pdf?cookie_passthrough=1),

## 7.9 Appendix I: Arrests and subsequent returns based on allegations from the public

Re: Freedom of Information request - 54089

Enforcement visit arrests, and subsequent returns, linked to information received.

Period	Total	
	Enforcement Visit Arrests  linked to Information received <sup>1,2</sup>	Subsequent  Returns <sup>3,4,5</sup>
2010 Q1	767	204

2010 Q2	677	165
2010 Q3	756	244
2010 Q4	599	223
2011 Q1	684	243
2011 Q2	554	218
2011 Q3	521	199
2011 Q4	498	191
2012 Q1	602	252
2012 Q2	640	346
2012 Q3	578	301
2012 Q4	665	340
2013 Q1	764	374
2013 Q2	1,318	734
2013 Q3	1,349	615
2013 Q4	1,134	520
2014 Q1	1,464	557
2014 Q2	1,274	543
2014 Q3	937	393
2014 Q4	837	332
2015 Q1	765	294
2015 Q2	1,100	412
2015 Q3	1,042	382
2015 Q4	755	254
2016 Q1	822	253
2016 Q2	940	259
2016 Q3	920	193
2016 Q4	763	136
2017 Q1	681	177
2017 Q2	866	186

2017 Q3	841	201
2017 Q4	646	162
2018 Q1	663	154
2018 Q2	728	147
2018 Q3	646	142
2018 Q4	594	87

Source: Home Office [in response to Freedom of Information request 54089], available at: [https://www.whatdotheyknow.com/request/582546/response/1395166/attach/3/54089%20Atkinson.pdf?cookie\\_passthrough=1](https://www.whatdotheyknow.com/request/582546/response/1395166/attach/3/54089%20Atkinson.pdf?cookie_passthrough=1)

## 7.10 Appendix J: 'Non-actionable' allegations by members of the public disaggregated by category

### 2012

	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4
<b>Duplicate</b>				
<b>False or unfounded information</b>				66
<b>Insufficient information</b>				1253
<b>Unspecified</b>				1175
<b>No location</b>				
<b>No offence</b>				811

### 2013

	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4
<b>Duplicate</b>	5	20	13	
<b>False or unfounded information</b>	125	112	130	
<b>Insufficient information</b>	2738	3542	3754	
<b>Unspecified</b>	1760	2103	1773	
<b>No location</b>		2	1	1
<b>No offence</b>	3232	3251	2640	



**2014**

	<b>Q1</b>	<b>Q2</b>	<b>Q3</b>	<b>Q4</b>
<b>Duplicate</b>	88	174	1391	
<b>False or unfounded information</b>	94	125	180	
<b>Insufficient information</b>	3684	3968	3875	
<b>Unspecified</b>	2412	2743	1160	
<b>No location</b>	6	22	130	
<b>No offence</b>	2171	2083	1781	

**2015**

	<b>Q1</b>	<b>Q2</b>	<b>Q3</b>	<b>Q4</b>
<b>Duplicate</b>	1736	1802	1667	
<b>False or unfounded information</b>	222	181	179	
<b>Insufficient information</b>	3844	3560	3336	
<b>Unspecified</b>	537	515	358	
<b>No location</b>	157	131	168	
<b>No offence</b>	1547	1372	1236	

**2016**

	<b>Q1</b>	<b>Q2</b>	<b>Q3</b>	<b>Q4</b>
<b>Duplicate</b>	1828	1681	1403	
<b>False or unfounded information</b>	185	150	176	
<b>Insufficient information</b>	2619	2452	2070	
<b>Unspecified</b>	425	471	340	
<b>No location</b>	182	191	137	
<b>No offence</b>	1331	1404	1111	

Source: Home Office [in response to Freedom of Information request 45533], available at: [https://www.whatdotheyknow.com/request/424946/response/1055591/attach/3/FOI%2045533%20Atkinson.pdf?cookie\\_passthrough=1](https://www.whatdotheyknow.com/request/424946/response/1055591/attach/3/FOI%2045533%20Atkinson.pdf?cookie_passthrough=1)

## 7.11 Appendix K: Home Office raids and 'community engagement' visits at places of worship

Enforcement operation visits undertaken by Immigration Enforcement at "Places of Worship" between January 2011 and December 2018

<b>Year</b>	<b>No. of Visit</b>
2011	6
2012	0
2013	0
2014	2
2015	0
2016	2
2017	0
2018	0
<b>Total</b>	<b>10</b>

Enforcement operation visits by Immigration Enforcement officers are intelligence-led and are carried out only where there is a reasonable prospect of encountering immigration offenders. Of the 10 enforcement operation visits conducted, our records show that four were authorised by a deputy director (G6). The further six visits took place in 2011 and we do not have the sufficient level of detail to confirm whether they were authorised by a deputy director. All enforcement visits in places of worship are conducted with the approval of those who run them and would include operations such as the disruption sham marriages.

- 1) These statistics have been taken from a live operational database. As such, numbers may change as information on that system is updated.
- 2) Enforcement operation data is only available from 2011 onwards in a reportable format.
- 3) Data extracted on 13/06/2019

Community Engagement visits undertaken by Immigration Enforcement at "Places of Worship" between January 2014 to December 2018

<b>Year</b>	<b>No. of Visit</b>
2014	48
2015	352
2016	552
2017	487

2018	402
<b>Total</b>	<b>1,841</b>

All immigration enforcement surgeries in places of worship, such as Gurdwara, Temples, Mosques and Churches, are conducted with the direct approval of those who run them. Immigration Enforcement does not gather intelligence or conduct enforcement activity during these visits.

These surgeries provide a trusted point of contact for those who have entered or remain in the UK illegally but now wish to discuss options to leave the UK voluntarily without the need for detention and enforced removal.

Source: Home Office [in response to Freedom of Information request 53881], available at: [https://www.whatdotheyknow.com/request/574622/response/1391597/attach/2/53881%20Atkinson%20response.pdf?cookie\\_passthrough=1](https://www.whatdotheyknow.com/request/574622/response/1391597/attach/2/53881%20Atkinson%20response.pdf?cookie_passthrough=1)

## 7.12 Appendix L: Asylum claims withdrawn in the UK, Jul. 2009 – Jun. 2019 and by quarter

2009M07	385
2009M08	330
2009M09	315
2009M10	270
2009M11	280
2009M12	225
2010M01	270
2010M02	275
2010M03	265
2010M04	220
2010M05	205
2010M06	260
2010M07	265
2010M08	245
2010M09	260
2010M10	315
2010M11	245
2010M12	225

<b>Q3 2009</b>	<b>343</b>
<b>Q4 2009</b>	<b>258</b>
<b>Q1 2010</b>	<b>270</b>
<b>Q2 2010</b>	<b>228</b>
<b>Q3 2010</b>	<b>257</b>
<b>Q4 2010</b>	<b>262</b>
<b>Q1 2011</b>	<b>278</b>
<b>Q2 2011</b>	<b>205</b>
<b>Q3 2011</b>	<b>212</b>
<b>Q4 2011</b>	<b>212</b>
<b>Q1 2012</b>	<b>205</b>
<b>Q2 2012</b>	<b>182</b>
<b>Q3 2012</b>	<b>202</b>
<b>Q4 2012</b>	<b>220</b>
<b>Q1 2013</b>	<b>275</b>
<b>Q2 2013</b>	<b>215</b>
<b>Q3 2013</b>	<b>220</b>
<b>Q4 2013</b>	<b>160</b>

2011M01	275
2011M02	280
2011M03	280
2011M04	180
2011M05	210
2011M06	225
2011M07	215
2011M08	200
2011M09	220
2011M10	270
2011M11	195
2011M12	170
2012M01	235
2012M02	195
2012M03	185
2012M04	155
2012M05	220
2012M06	170
2012M07	205
2012M08	225
2012M09	175
2012M10	230
2012M11	220
2012M12	210
2013M01	200
2013M02	395
2013M03	230
2013M04	200

Q1 2014	192
Q2 2014	190
Q3 2014	215
Q4 2014	238
Q1 2015	373
Q2 2015	218
Q3 2015	193
Q4 2015	260
Q1 2016	257
Q2 2016	257
Q3 2016	303
Q4 2016	268
Q1 2017	272
Q2 2017	260
Q3 2017	305
Q4 2017	297
Q1 2018	300
Q2 2018	295
Q3 2018	280
Q4 2018	277
Q1 2019	247
Q2 2019	270

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2013M05	245
2013M06	200
2013M07	350
2013M08	155
2013M09	155
2013M10	150
2013M11	155
2013M12	175
2014M01	185
2014M02	175
2014M03	215
2014M04	160
2014M05	200
2014M06	210
2014M07	215
2014M08	200
2014M09	230
2014M10	225
2014M11	250
2014M12	240
2015M01	375
2015M02	370
2015M03	375
2015M04	185
2015M05	225
2015M06	245
2015M07	190
2015M08	210
2015M09	180

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2015M10	205
2015M11	265
2015M12	310
2016M01	255
2016M02	250
2016M03	265
2016M04	265
2016M05	220
2016M06	285
2016M07	255
2016M08	330
2016M09	325
2016M10	260
2016M11	305
2016M12	240
2017M01	255
2017M02	235
2017M03	325
2017M04	235
2017M05	285
2017M06	260
2017M07	335
2017M08	320
2017M09	260
2017M10	295
2017M11	345
2017M12	250
2018M01	295
2018M02	305



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2018M03	300
2018M04	275
2018M05	330
2018M06	280
2018M07	325
2018M08	285
2018M09	230
2018M10	280
2018M11	310
2018M12	240
2019M01	215
2019M02	205
2019M03	320
2019M04	175
2019M05	310
2019M06	325

Source: Eurostat, [online] Available at:

[https://appsso.eurostat.ec.europa.eu/nui/show.do?dataset=migr\\_asywithm&lang=en](https://appsso.eurostat.ec.europa.eu/nui/show.do?dataset=migr_asywithm&lang=en)

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